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OPEN ALL NIGHT

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OPEN ALL NIGHT

BY PAUL MORAND

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INTRODUCTION

A YOUNG FRENCH AUTHOR TO THE ENGLISH PUBLIC

I FIRST came to England in 1902 at the age of 13. (The British troops were just returning from the South African War.) Since then I have gone back there every year at the moment when the fogs disappear and reveal a green island inhabited by good, strong, silent men. At the age of 20 I went to Oxford: I lived in London from 1913 to 1916.

We expect books and steamers to take us to a land of dreams in order to balance the country in which we live. England has been that land of dreams for me. A marvellous country, the nearest to mine and, luckily, still the least known. Nowhere but in England have I found respect for human life, a delight in silence, love of animals, ignorance of hate or envy, generosity, qualities which, to my mind, are superior to all others.

I cannot imagine any philosophy which is not based on experience, any moral code which cuts me off from

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natural ties, any poetry which is based on logic, any realism which is not poetic, any intellectual exercise which does not counterbalance physical love, any life which is not devoted to acquiring a sympathetic knowledge of Europe and of the Universe. It is to England that I owe all this.

Critics have discovered in my work a certain savagery mixed with a delight in bright colours and in figures of speech which have never before been used ; a bitter taste of truth ; simple effects arrived at by the uncertain paths of irony. Perhaps in that will be found the mark of the Elizabethan drama, of the Restoration comedies and of the great eighteenth-century romances, of Webster, Congreve and Fielding, whose influence on me now dates from fifteen years ago.

I have been steeped in English civilization, and I have never felt either impatience, uneasiness or regret about it. I have never had to endure from her those outrages or those fatal enchantments which are the inevitable consequence of all other upbringing. I have never met with anything but tolerance, trust and kindness in England. I am glad to be able to put this on record here for the first time.

PAUL MORAND.

PARIS, December, 1922.

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I WAS going to have a lady to travel with. Half of her already adorned the compartment in which I sat. The other half, leaning out of the window, still belonged to Lausanne station and to a delegation of men of various nationalities, welded together by the same shadow on the platform, linked by the same wild rose in the buttonhole of each of them. Bells began to ring. Passengers ran about on the asphalt. As though at the bidding of the time-table the signal drooped like a scarlet fruit at the top of its latticed trunk. A whistle blew. The lady shook hands over the lowered window ; a freckled British hand ; a pulpy German hand ; a Russian hand with a skin like parchment ; the slim fingers of a Japanese. And lastly a young

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Spaniard whose stock covered a boil on his neck stretched out a grimy hand covered with copper rings and said :

“ Good-bye, Doña Remedios ! ”

Then the crowd parted and through the gap a mauve star twinkled, followed by a soft flare and a cloud of smoke through which a film camera performed its bewildered duties without delay.

One by one the train broke from the handshakes that were anchoring it and, having gained its freedom, sped away. A shout went up :—“ Long live the International ! ” but it was instantly smothered by the clatter of the turntables and the velvety darkness of a tunnel.

The lady still leant rashly out of the window, waving. I prevailed on her to stop by placing a hand on her plump shoulder, and I drew her attention to the enamelled notice on which was written :—

IT IS DANGEROUS TO ALLOW CHILDREN TO LEAN
OUT OF THE WINDOWS,

at which she smiled, turning towards me.

Beautiful, handsome, pretty, intriguing. In that

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moment Fate made amends for the disappointments of so many other train departures, in which it is the woman with whom one wants to travel who remains behind on the platform, whilst the man who was with her sits next to one, without any indication until that moment as to which of the two was going to travel, so equally affected were they by the parting, so equally full of emotion in their fancy tweed clothes.

There was no disillusionment when the train came out of the tunnel. Under cover of a drowsiness with which I pretended to be overcome I began to study my companion's features as though they were a map, so that I should be in no danger of following the wrong road. A charming and undulating country bounded by shoes and a hat. I always envy those passport officials whose daily task enables them to make a record on their forms of so many human faces, cold, warm, as different from one another as the flower-like imprints of finger-tips.

In this face, with its soft curves, frankly no feature was remarkable ; her full lips, her forehead, her high cheekbones which, seen three-quarter face,

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hid her eyelids from one's gaze, cutting one's glance off slantwise in an irresistible way and sending it off in one of those theatrical exits known as "into the wings" which deceive no one but are none the less charming. Her bosom rose in a gentle slope to her rounded neck, encircled by a plain necklace of imitation pearls, and shaded by a youthful and determined chin. On her first finger shone a sapphire set in brilliants; her thin silk dress fell in a fold between her short thighs. In the mittened hands spread flat upon her knees, in her feet, so arched that they almost seemed to bulge and which did not quite reach the floor, in her hair which, when she took off her hat, seemed to be tightly stretched back to her ears where it was allowed to escape in frothy waves, so oiled that it ceased to be black and reflected every colour of its surroundings, in the back hair twisted like a wrung-out cloth and glistening with brilliantine, in all these things one's memory was taken irresistibly back to Spain.

She leant her head against the railway embroidery on the head-rest and went to sleep quite naturally. Perhaps I had hypnotized her.

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When we drew near Geneva we entered a storm which burst suddenly. Terrific thunder-claps crashed against the mountain peaks, drowning the noise of the train. A whimper came from somewhere. My companion woke with a start and unconsciously made the sign of the cross. Taken unawares, she wore that look of a bird with ruffled plumage which southern women get when travelling. The young ones lose their composure and become wooden, whilst the older ones turn a lead-grey colour and droop beneath the splendour of their jewels. The sky was rent like a piece of silk. With more suddenness even than a Press photographer's flashlight, the lightning had fallen on the railway track. I offered to pull down the blind.

"I'm not frightened of the storm, but my dog, who is in her basket, can't bear it."

Then, as though she had been stripped by the thunder, she opened a bag and reconstructed her face behind a cloud of powder. There was a white lock amongst her black hair, like a jet of steam in a puff of coal smoke. The whimpering began again under the seat and went on until she made up her

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mind to take a mongrel fox-terrier with fawn-coloured ears out of a gilt basket on which was written "Souvenir of the Rigi." In order to put her more at her ease I opened my bag and took out a teddy bear and a red donkey. She complimented me on my menagerie. On my side I showered praises on her dog in a way which is usually only done on suburban lines.

"Trick is ugly, monsieur, but I love her because she is all that I have left in the world."

"Nevertheless, the leave-takings which I witnessed at the station a little while ago seemed to be extraordinarily warm. Having only been in Lausanne a few hours myself, I know nothing at all of a person worthy of being photographed by flashlight. Perhaps you've been giving a charity performance at the Casino?"

"I am not, monsieur, altogether an actress." As she finished the word, lisping slightly, her tongue appeared for a moment between her closed teeth like minute grains of rice. She favoured me with a tired smile. "Even though I have played a part in the most terrible judicial parody of the century.

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My name is Remedios Sirvent and I was the companion of Estebán Puig,* the Catalonian champion of liberty, legally assassinated at Barcelona last spring by the reactionaries of the police, the army and the Church."

I had, like everyone else, taken a passing interest in that event, which some considered to be a just punishment and others a martyrdom, and which had subsequently been relegated to oblivion. Consequently I was greatly surprised at the description which she gave me of the gathering at Lausanne and at the thought of which—here she beat her breast—she still thrilled.

In order that all restrictions of individual action should cease, and with the object of bringing pressure to bear on the Spanish Government, the International Socialist Bureau had organized a monster demonstration.

The mass meeting, she explained to me, took place in the rain, on the borders of the lake, in close, serried ranks. A seething mass of humanity stretched as far as the balconies of the villas and

* Pronounced *Pootch*, meaning "mountain" in Catalan.

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the hotel terraces ; the roofs were packed with sight-seers ; souvenir cards were sold ; subscription lists were filled with names ; preceded by their silken streamers the delegations marched forward ; anarchist contingents from Zurich and Lugano beneath their black banners ; Russian social-revolutionaries, Indian nationalists, American Zionists, the General Unions of French and Belgian workers ; the officials of the Independent Labour Party and of the Second International sang hymns. All the comrades were there : Rosario, Rakovski, Vandervelde, Luxembourg, Jaurès, Burns, Thomas, Lippovici. A never to be forgotten moment. What mattered it that one no longer possessed a country, when one was received as she had been received, at the threshold of humanity ? She would go about her duties now with renewed strength of purpose, pushing aside all obstacles in her path, striving to banish the languor which overcomes one after a great sorrow, and during which nature recruits her strength. She wanted to remain bruised, both in her opinions and in her affections, and to know no rest unless the work to which Puig

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had devoted his life were continued and the Cause striven after. He had left her beyond the reach of need. She belonged to the lower middle classes and was too much inclined by nature to a life of luxury and ease beneath a tranquil sky. But she could not drift into becoming the charming widow, preoccupied by her white rabbits and her vineyards, taking the air in her carriage in the evening in her widow's weeds. She felt the need of great international conflicts, of European upheavals, of harsh climates, propaganda voyages and lectures, to compel attention, to win the hearts of the people, to keep the memory of the dead man green and to obtain a revision of his shameful trial.

Enthusiasm radiated from her eyes, her lips and the palms of her hands, with a mixture of playfulness and childishness which was particularly attractive; sometimes she interpreted her thoughts seriously, announcing its degeneracy to a decadent world; in her own words, "throwing the blame on it." Sometimes she started off on a frantic and confused flow of invective without, however, losing any of her charm in the process.

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The idea of a new order of Society enraptured her so much that beads of moisture stood out on her brow. The natural ardent charity of the Spaniard gave way before a fervour of despotism which was only held in check by her eloquence. But at the back of everything there remained the cold and austere religious sense and the respect for established rule which are the nearest kin to prayer. Her marvellous credulity was a great asset, egging her on in her course of romantic sacrilege and above all giving her the strength to be insatiable which is usually lacking in revolutionaries of the Latin races, satisfied with so little.

"*Hombre*," she said, "my life is expressed in four words: service, knowledge, faith, love."

She enlarged upon this idea, but before explaining it, insisted on defining her position in relation to the different political parties in Spain. For my part, I listened with such good will that I fell asleep.

We were approaching the frontier.

The lightning still accompanied us, punctuated

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by desultory thunder-claps, like an endless argument amongst the mountain tops. Doña Remedios still nursed her dog which, covering its mistress' knees with its ears, gloomily surveyed her little feet adorned with beautifully chased buckles, shaped like pieces of barbaric jewellery.

The daylight grew fainter and the sky seemed gradually to char like a smoking lamp in the rays of the setting sun. Eau de Cologne was shaking monotonously about in its bottles at the bottom of bags with the gurgling sound of subterranean springs; my companion, comfortably ensconced in the corner of that one night travelling home, steeped in smoke and smelling of hot leather, was reading *Les Samedis de Chiffonette*.

The sound of iron-shod boots on the metal foot-warmers announced the customs examination. Doña Remedios lifted her eyes.

"Nothing to declare," she said.

A southern French customs officer, accompanied by a Swiss soldier, on whose cap one noticed with surprise the absence of the word *LIFT*, pointed to a parcel of some size lying in the rack.

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“What have you got in that game-basket?” he asked.

With a gesture of mixed irritation and shyness my companion rose and lifted down a thick bunch of palms tied in a bundle by a red silk ribbon. She opened it and I saw in the midst of the foliage a plaster gentleman with empty eye-sockets who looked like President Carnot.

“There!” she said, proudly, “that is the statue of Esteban Puig which was presented to me this afternoon by the B.I.L. (Bureau Internationale de Lausanne). Must one pay duty on one’s remembrance of the dead on entering France?”

And she wiped away a tear with a lace handkerchief the size of a postage-stamp.

Samuel Pacifico, professor of history at the Louis-le-Grand college, was at home to his friends every Sunday in his sixth floor attic in the rue Saint-Jacques. Since leaving school we had always kept up the custom of visiting our old master. The author of “The History of the Working-Classes” was a timid shaggy dwarf with a network of blue

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veins, who smelt of the quartier Saint-Paul, made his own shoes and cut his own hair with a machine which he had invented himself. He used to walk down the Boulevard Saint-Michel, hugging the wall, talking to himself and scrutinizing everyone with his grey and black eyes which reminded one of a photographic plate in a yellow developer. He had preserved for us that affection which had formerly deprived our lessons of their irksomeness, and which later we had fostered and returned, no subsequent experience which we may have had having ever again brought the good luck which was ours from childhood, of finding a man who did not mind corrupting a youth which was no longer worthy of corruption. His intelligence, which was profound enough to have overthrown a nation, was entirely at the service of Science. He imposed a discipline and austere habits on himself which he did not even desire for us, holding himself, as it were, responsible for our happiness. The Jesuits, against their inclination, took us, their boarders, to Pacifico's classes, disapproving all the time of his infernal wit ; later, at the Political Science lectures, Monsieur Laguil-

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lère-Desveaux would interrupt his polished and colourless discourse in order to put us on our guard against "the anti-liberal licentiousness with which nowadays people proceed to the study of Social Science."

Pacifico never went out to dinner, never set foot in a drawing-room and only crossed the Seine in order to go to the rue de la Paix to buy rings, of which he had a collection which drove women to distraction. It was the only Eastern taste he possessed. He commanded respect as having played his part in the pomps (and also in some of the shady intrigues) of the Third Republic, an active part which will never be accredited to him by history, exerting his influence on behalf of his friends, avenging them, bringing to bear a subtle pressure, which ministerial cabinets rarely resisted for more than a few hours, seeking no personal advantage and having for his recreation nothing but his weekly receptions.

It would have been useless to have tried to open one of Bayle's folios in the room in the rue Saint-Jacques on Sunday evenings towards six o'clock;

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there would have been no room. In an atmosphere of tobacco and sealing-wax one found university students in dinner jackets and ready-made ties, examination crammers with their acid-stained fingers, an unfrocked priest, a painted female lawyer or two, a few members of the communist colonies of Draveil who stole the teaspoons, and an actress from the Théâtre-Français converted to modern art, who had refused the Legion of Honour and talked of acting only for the lower classes.

Nevertheless, I was amazed to see my travelling companion of the previous week walk into the circular study, picking her way between the books and manuscripts. I wondered why it had not struck me that I should meet her here. This room, as unpretending as a railway turntable on a branch line, the abode of a scholar and recluse, unknown to Paris as is indeed everything else, was it not famous to the foreigner? On crossing the frontier, on the threshold of France, the first enquiries he makes are about hotels and about this address. Wells, Unamuno, Gorki, Wedekind (Shaw simply put, 'G.B.S. Irishman') have signed their names

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in the master's visitors' book. The leaders of Europe have come here to pick up hints about the governing of their countries. It was natural that Doña Remedios, in her turn, should continue her work close to the man who could drown his burning thoughts in wisdom in the same way that, after a war, explosives are relegated to the bottom of the sea. She sat there draped in a graduate's gown lined with white satin, accompanied her *repêches* with little grimaces and mechanically turned over the pages of Jaurès' "Social History of the French Revolution" as though it were a warrant for her presence there.

"We are old friends," she said, when Pacifico introduced me. "A storm brought us together."

She recalled the station, the thunder and the whining of her dog Trick.

"That journey," I said, "seems almost mythical to me now, and Switzerland has taken on a dignity which has not really been hers for a hundred years. The integrity of the air, the eloquence of the mountain torrents, the red elegy of your widowhood and that precious train of ours with its two engines

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which bore us through such forests of symbols and pines (Remedios never flinched), I shall retain all these pictures in my mind for ever."

How inviting she looked, hazarding in Paris the confections of the best dressmaker of the Parallelo—an unrelieved black—a pretentious hat with a feather in it, a silver fox fur, a little blood in her cheeks and a little blood on her hands, brooding on vengeance through those autumn days during which, at the bidding of the chrysanthemums, one passes so imperceptibly into winter.

Pacifico begged her to write something in his album.

"Will a quotation do?"

When she had put on her spectacles and taken up the pen, I suggested:

"Why not a thought of your own?"

She laughed and held the book out:

"It is a quotation from our Moratin."

We read:—

*'Being young and thoughtless she was therefore
a charming woman.'*

Remedios,

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My confusion made her laugh and she observed that it would be a lesson to me not to make fun of her.

“ In the first place,” I said, “ I met you in Helvetia where one is allowed to think, and besides I can assure you that in Paris abstract ideas are no longer practicable ; every thought has to be expressed in anecdote.”

The master took up the cudgels for Remedios and denounced me as having a purely literary turn of mind. In this way we passed the time till dinner to which we were asked to stay : for these gatherings added to their other attractions that of being far from inimical to laughter, particularly when the Collège de France made way for the younger generation which, Pacifico said, “ prolonged his life.” The food was good and the wines carefully chosen, our host having entrusted the care of his establishment to a housekeeper who had at one time made the bishop’s palace at Toulouse the best pot-house in the south-west provinces.

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A few of us remained that evening under the vanilla-tinted light of the gothic bronze chandelier, surrounded by the illusive pastures of the tapestries on which, facing each other, were hung portraits of Renan and Berthelot, who continued their conversation above the fumes of turkey and cabbage. Remedios presided over this family dinner with her head and shoulders proudly erect.

Pacifico held a glass of sherry to the light and then presented it to Remedios, saying :

“To your health and to the glory of Puig.”

“I thank you and I believe you, on my word of honour. In rushing headlong to his death, Estebán did nothing more than to answer the call of the oppressed with a hero's heart.

“And now darkness is spreading over Spain once more,” added Pacifico.

“So it will always be, *hombre*, each time anyone tries to goad into life a proletariat which has stagnated for centuries in monastic ignorance and in barbarism,” said Remedios with her thick Spanish accent. “Estebán realized the futility of violence after the attempt of 1905, and he explained to me

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that the problem would have to be approached from a greater distance. 'We are working for thirty, for fifty years hence,' he said. But as soon as he had revealed his plans they made away with him."

One of the guests, a professor of semasiology, asked her to explain.

Full of her subject, Remedios considered us with the challenging air of a great pianist who is about to attack *Symphonic Variations*. But she must have seen the look I gave her, devoid of all interest and enthusiasm, for she cut out the peroration and, in a rapid voice, laid down her conclusions.

"There is nothing to say that you don't know already," she said. "To the traveller, Spain is just like any other country, with lottery tickets, watering places, life insurance, members of parliament who kiss each other on the mouth after debates, and lifts whose floors are lit up as soon as one sets foot in them. A picturesque cesspool. Barcelona is cast in a South American mould, and there the sleeping cars break into flower at the end of their stalks in hotels which are blooms of mahogany and blue velvet. One goes through the streets on metal

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wires, one paints as at Schwabing, one only applauds the bull-fighters on their return from Buenos Aires and one constructs tiled buildings in which one can drive a motor-car up to the fifth floor. Then suddenly, round a bend in the road, appears the Blessed Sacrament, that obsolete coinage which still circulates among us ; the people fall on their knees (they are fined if they don't) and one sees officials in blue silk belts carrying candles, followed by officers in cassocks and field-boots. The over-loaded tram-cars stop, surrounded by yoked oxen and Hispano-Suiza cars, to make room for these people with the heads of Inquisitors, these mitred vultures, these mean old peasant faces issuing from priceless lace, the lackeys of a God who abandons the poor in order to fawn upon the rich. Or else, if the traveller doesn't read the papers and therefore doesn't know that a strike is imminent, he is surprised one morning on waking to see from the windows of his hotel the guardia civil in their yellow equipment lying in ambush at the corners of the streets, waiting for the syndicated worker to issue forth. The town, haughty yesterday beneath its diadem of electric light, and

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distributing alms to the rest of Spain, is thenceforth as empty as the Sepulchre on the third day. 'The civil population is driven to work before the muzzles of the mercenaries' rifles. 'Constitutional guarantees are suspended and a police of hired assassins carry out a systematic search in those suburbs of ours smelling of charred bones, essence of cesspool and resin. Everything now proceeds according to an abominable preconceived plan. The civil authority resigns and martial law is declared ; following a telegram which is said to come from Madrid but which in actual fact the governor always keeps in his safe, the government passes into the hands of the most backward beings that exist on the face of the earth, only equalled, perhaps, by some of the Russian governors in the Caucasian provinces. The artillery takes up its position in the public squares, machine-guns are placed on the monuments. 'The troops shoot without orders. People are arrested in their homes, searches are carried out at all hours of the day and night, trials take place without counsel or witnesses, depositions being read out in a parody of justice. Then one day at

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dawn in the moat of the fortress they kill. It's all over! Truth is veiled for another fifty years."

She took a cigar, lit it and blew a long cloud of smoke beneath the chandelier. Then she hummed a tune they play in Spain for the entry of the bull.

"Don't let my nervous temperament worry you. In reality these memories are a consolation to me. In Paris people work well, but they forget too soon. There is no time here to think of death, which is an ordinary Spanish amusement. One ought to think of it; it helps to keep things in their proper focus. Either the present order of Society must change or I must leave my bones on it. I don't want to die until the great fictions of life, Religion, Authority, Family, which with us still retain all their evil influence, have had their emptiness exposed, nor do I want to die without having helped my brothers and sisters to rid themselves of the burden of 'pobreness,' and of the yoke of the capitalist and of the 'padrón.' Of all those who exploit the poor the Catalonians are the most bitter, the most cruel and the most unjust.

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Oh ! how wonderful it would be to exterminate them all ! ”

And she banged her fist on the table, not with her thumb inside her fingers, as women generally do, but placed correctly over the fingers like a lid. Her bosom and the glasses trembled.

Suddenly her mood changed to one of gaiety and she pushed her chair away from the table, addressing herself to Pacifico :

“ Thank you, fosterfather, for my good dinner.”

“ My little red child, your home is here, as they say in your country.”

“ For a moment,” she said, “ we swerve from our purpose and neglect our duty. That is the whole treacherous cunning of Paris. But to-morrow we resume our labours until the moment comes for the prison gates to fly open and for the whole fabric of prolific and radiant Spain to crumble to the ground.”

She was exquisite in this mood, in her ardour and her strength ; in her moments of repose she seemed disconnected, with an affectation which was usually out of place, and she was generally

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rather ridiculous. To think in capitals and to fly to extremes suited her, even though after being swept away by her one had, as a sort of self-punishment, a distinct tendency to look upon her as a character in a Spanish tragi-comedy. Looking at her under the chandelier, wasting her strength in extravagant phrases, a well-built woman with a firm cool body and the sturdy limbs of a well-fed shopkeeper's wife, one hesitated from sharing or indeed refused altogether to share her enthusiasm. But she had even less charm when she became once more a nice, simple, naturally fresh young woman. She seemed to alternate between an eagle and a hen. In any case, she was a graceful figure, without any particular genius and without any of the outward signs of adversity. Misfortune had inscribed no bitterness on her soft childish nose or on her full lips ; no wrinkles furrowed her low forehead or the eyelids stretched over her wide eyes filled with a lasting but harmless fire.

I went on studying her. She had dispensed with all creeds and had freed herself from human ties and divine pledges ; one did not expect less

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of her for that. But when all was said what one felt most about this rebel girl was her sense of well-being, the integrity of her thoughts, her catholic ancestry, mixed with that middle-class Spanish attitude of grateful respect towards man which is a legacy from the Moors. As we sat round her we were all conscious of these things, but we all had an inclination urging us to put her beliefs to the test, watching for any sign of weakening, believing that hers was more a sentimental escapade into the world of anarchism than a true vocation.

"Remedios," said one of the guests, "as we left the table, "is an eclogue of a thoroughly domestic kind. She is a mermaid in the sea of Marxism."

"It would be interesting to see into her future," said Pacifico, who had leanings towards occultism.

Everyone had something to say :—

"I think her end will come in days of violence, full of bloodshed in spite of her."

"She will marry a bull-fighter who has retired on his wounds and will keep a hotel in Algeciras."

"She will give lectures in the Argentine or go on the cinema stage."

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"Is she at all literary?"

"No, I believe she's quite a good girl."

From this point onwards all seriousness ceased. A friend of Pacifico's childhood, an old gentleman with rouged cheeks who played chess and repaired old lace, offered to tell our fortunes by cards. But we preferred the game which consists in giving each person a list of qualities or defects against which he has to give himself marks ranging from 0 to 20. We were soon pencilling away on our knees. The old gentleman established himself at the piano and played the overture to *Les Indes galantes*. The autumn wind blew white ash from the fire all over the carpet.

Remedios moistened her pencil with a look of perplexity and asked the difference between sensuality and temperament, maintaining that in Spanish there was only one word for both and that she, for her part, saw no difference between them. Pacifico, in his precise way, got the uncompromising idea of "goodness" changed to "niceness." Someone else pointed out that we had forgotten "snobbishness." Some of them cheated,

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others, seized with remorse, scratched out their marks, or, after a brief examination of conscience, increased them. Remedios proceeded hesitatingly, indiarubber in hand, full of sincerity. I asked if one could give oneself more than 20 marks for anything.

There was no sound save that made by the house-keeper clearing the table, the creaking of the furniture and the regular ticking of the clock. When the lists were complete, Pacifico called out each quality or defect and each person in turn, either boldly or sheepishly, called out the number of marks he had given himself for it.

"Man, know thyself," said Pacifico. And so we did, extraordinarily well. The younger ones were, I must admit, sometimes rather wide of the mark, but for those who had reached a certain age there were certainly no illusions left.

We then went on to the second part of the game, which consisted in taking one's neighbour's list and substituting for his marks the marks which we thought he really deserved.

"But you know nothing at all about me," ex-

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claimed Remedios, as I took possession of her moral inventory.

I answered, that I could always guess and that in any case I had drunk out of her glass in the dining-car when she was not looking.

Many days have passed since that happy Sunday. But I have still got Remedios' list, carefully drawn up by her and corrected by me. I give here, for ~~what~~ it is worth, this precious document which, beneath its dry figures, seems to me now to be full of admissions :—

REMEDIOS

<i>Qualities or defects.</i>	<i>Marks given by her.</i>	<i>Marks as amended by me.</i>
Beauty	18	14
Charm	9	17
Elegance	20	8.
Intelligence	2	7
Genius	3	?
Sensitiveness	8	19
Business sense	1	18
Sensuality	0	19
Temperament	2	15

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REMEDIOS—(continued)

<i>Qualities or defects.</i>	<i>Marks given by her.</i>	<i>Marks as amended by me.</i>
Modesty	20	10
Political sense	19	3
Judgment	8	4
Wit	10	10
Religious feeling	0	20
Snobbishness	7	17
Luck	0	19
Sense of humour	1	18
Will power	16	5
Selfishness	19	4
Greed	18	18
.		

"If you like, Remedios, we could dine together one evening, without dressing, and go to a cinema."

"I should love to. I hate being alone. I hear mysterious knockings on my shutters every evening and the ghost of a nun appears from the back of my wardrobe every time I open it to get out my nightgown."

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"*Et j'ai peur de mourir lorsque je couche seule.*"

"Who wrote that?"

"Mallarmé, but it should have been Baudelaire."

"Come and fetch me on Tuesday at seven o'clock at the Hôtel du Mexique in the rue Servandoni."

I had to wait for Remedios in the palm-filled hall, seated in a blue cane armchair, until the hands of the cuckoo clock pointed to a quarter to nine. Dinner, which was served on linoleum table-cloths with an Ispahan pattern, had been cleared away for two hours. The ecclesiastic contingent of the establishment had fondled the cat and read the advertisements in *La Croix* and the games of piquet were finishing. They were beginning to go to bed. At last Remedios came down, glistening with diamonds beneath a cloak of black Liberty silk, through which one caught an intimate glimpse of full evening dress, with the key of her room and her candlestick in her hand. An elaborately cut tortoiseshell comb a foot high towered above her and knocked against the top of the carriage. At the sight of these things I changed my mind about taking her to a cabaret and I ran my mind

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along the grands boulevards to try to think of a restaurant in which a cloak like this would not be out of place.

In spite of all my precautions, our entry did not pass altogether unnoticed.

“ Please get it firmly into your mind that I want nothing but vegetables and a glass of water.”

“ Remedios, wonderful woman of a wonderful evening, do be serious. Do you like it dry or sweet ? ”

Between the salt cellar and the pepper pot she deposited her white gloves twisted together, a velvet bag on which the following motto was worked in diamonds :—

REMEDIOS

SIN DIOS

and a fan made of green feathers.

“ I’ll have some oysters,” she declared with resignation, “ if you will ask them to do one up in paper for me to take home to my Chinese gold

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fish. I should also like the outside slice of the saddle for Trick. You are dining with a woman who was rich this morning and who has nothing left to-night. I think I told you in the train—in that spontaneous impulse to talk of oneself which is evoked by sympathy—that by his will Estebán Puig had left me beyond the reach of need. He left me two houses let on lease at Biarritz. In point of fact, rumour attributed a much larger fortune to me. It hurt me to think of it. Buying *El Debate*, the organ of the Jesuits, at a kiosk in the Boulevard Saint-Michel this morning, I realized how much use our enemies were making of this. So I went straight to my lawyer and made him draw up a formal deed of renunciation which I signed there and then and which will be published to-morrow in *l'Humanité*. The whole of Puig's gift will pass to his Socialist Institute. Which explains why I am penniless this evening."

She laughed and stirred her wine with her fork.

"No, there is nothing praiseworthy about this renunciation. It was wrong of me ever to have

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accepted it. I can never lose the real gifts I received from Puig. He found me, chose me and raised me to his level when I was nothing but a pupil teacher in a suburban school. He made me read, think ; until the very day of his death his one desire for me was to make me a companion worthy of him. He was twenty years my senior, tall, with a head like a boulder and the eyes of a basilisk, but the lower part of his face and his hands were serene and full of wisdom. That is how he struck me when he came to my home one evening to ask me if I would take night classes for working-class children. His voice shook and seemed to issue from some secret hiding-place. He told me that he needed me. His face was as white as an altar cloth. I followed him."

The dress she was wearing fitted her closely and was cut low, her bosom swelling above it like an overflowing cup.

"Where did you get your dress?"

"At Worth's," she said, "they called it 'Eastern

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Night.' It can't be helped . . . In future I shall copy the dresses in the woman's supplement of the *Vanguardia*."

She went on speaking:—

"Just think. Puig was the soul of the Socialist Institute. It was created by him in 19— on an entirely new basis of teaching, at any rate in Spain, and there (you can imagine how revolutionary it was), he gave a mixed education both in the social and the sexual sense of the word. In addition he insisted on a moral and material cleanliness, teaching truth without either rewards or punishments, and knowledge without religion, making a fair distribution of mental and manual labour. In a word the system consisted of the admirable scholastic enactments of your Convention, the ideas of Lavoisier put into practice, to quote Puig, as they have never been in France. Reclus and Kropotkin helped. I've got a wonderful correspondence with them in one of my hat boxes. But to create all this was to wage the battle of light against darkness and this cannot be done with impunity. Puig was crushed. In my country one must not take

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the children away from the church people who want to make a saint of everyone."

She stopped talking, absorbed in her pocket mirror.

"How dark my complexion is! 'I wonder why?'"

"A woman's complexion, Remedios, is her conscience."

"I am upsetting myself too much. Please forgive me, but I must keep on reminding myself of these things. In spite of the head waiter who is listening to us with such awe, you must hear the exordium of Puig's funeral oration as it was delivered over his grave by Portet. It went like this: 'The reputed son of one of those innumerable gods created by man is condemned to death because he wished to be proclaimed king. He is about to die. Born, as are all gods, of ignorance and fear, he falters when face to face with death, loses confidence and cries tremulously: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" On the other hand, look at Puig, the son of free thought and of morality without the sanctions; he also is about to die. Does he flinch? Does he lose his freedom

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of thought? No! He stands stiffly erect to the end, crying as he falls: "Long live the International!" " " "

Remedios' eyes are black or grey or blue. How can one tell? All eyes are of all colours. My pleasure suddenly collapses. With hands as clumsy as wooden splints I take her hand. On her wrist she is wearing a bracelet of graduated sapphires. I feel I want to leave the place, but everything seems to have taken root. It is all a dream. My heart aches as though someone were extracting teeth from it..

" Remedios ! "

" *Por favor?* "

" As a favour, let me love you."

" You would be making a great mistake if you did," she replied, shrugging her shoulders in little quick movements which had the effect of doing away entirely with her already short neck.

" It is principally to avoid it that I say it, dear remedy."

This talk of love gave the coffee back its taste and restored that equipoise which procures for us the

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sympathy of tradesmen and the friendship of destiny.

"The fact is that when I am not violent and weak and overcome by the withering emotion of love, my wickedness, Remedios, knows no bounds."

"Yes, I've noticed that," she replied, "and to be quite frank, for my part, I am quite certain that I shall never love anyone again. That side of my life is finished. Physical love is nothing but a magnificent debauch which time can, if necessary, replace. But when the bonds that bind two hearts are once broken, it is different."

She quoted some grossly sentimental Andalusian proverb which I have forgotten and which suddenly detracted from her beauty.

After a moment of silence she went on :—

"I am going to make my living by giving Spanish lessons."

"May I be one of your pupils?"

"My first and my favourite one."

The revolving door of the restaurant turned its pink silk paddle-boards in the concave water of its

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glass sides. The tables were emptying. Women were going downstairs in their brightly lined cloaks like statues in coloured alcoves; men were looking anxiously for their companions or their hats.

Remedios exuded a fragrance in the warm room like wine that has been warmed. The last diners also gave forth an impression of delightful well-being. The wine-waiter became god-like. A lady who was drinking with one finger in the air remarked as she finished :—

“ Yes, it's very good, it leaves a slight taste.”

The radiators were cooling with a sound of cracking joints.

Remedios pushed aside her plate and her glass, took her lip-salve and drew a *jota* on the table cloth.

“ First steps. The alphabet is A B C D E F G H I J . . . that's the *jota*. No, it isn't a dance, it's the first difficulty that besets you when you cross the Pyrenees.”

For a moment I tried to pronounce it.

“ Your progress surprises me,” said Remedios,

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flatteringly. "Now let's choose a phrase in which the r's and j's are well distributed,

EL PAJARITO DE LA CAJA ROJA."

"What does that purring sound mean, Remedios?"

"It means: 'The little bird in the red cage.'"

"But, Remedios, that's you!"

It is late. We rise. The restaurant is empty. I love her for life. Whilst she goes to the cloak-room I return to our little table and clandestinely lick her spoon.

I had patiently accustomed my tongue to rolling r's on my teeth from which I threw them back with a sudden movement on to the glottis in the pronunciation of a not too imperfect *jota*. On my way to the rue Servandoni I set myself the task of repeating a hundred times the phrase which Remedios had taught me two days before.

At the hotel I found a note waiting for me. Remedios had left France the day before by the Barcelona express. The red cage was empty. All that was left was this revolting hall decorated

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with lizard skins, with coloured glass and with the cat which was devouring a sort of brain pudding out of an imitation Rouen plate. The autumn day was dying peacefully away under the canopy of an orange-coloured storm, and was being momentarily prolonged by the coat which painters, singing at their work, were putting on the front of the houses.

I stood in the Luxembourg like a monolith crushed beneath the habits of two long days, suddenly crystallized into a fidelity that was new to me. I had keyed myself up to meet Remedios again, to beset her with childish excitements as one does to stop hiccoughs, to put a thousand questions of grammar to her, to create quaint fancies for her, without ever revealing to her my purpose, which was to keep her thoughts on myself, to persuade her that all the refinements of Paris, the atmosphere of the Seine, the genius of the Saint-Michel fountain from which the water overflows like a bath in which one has fallen asleep with the tap on, the statement of the programme girl offering you a programme: 'it cost *me* a franc,'

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the charm of private rooms in restaurants, the broad outlook of the big Stores where the remnants unroll in little waves beneath the arc lamps of the central hall like dazzling orchids, were all nothing but different forms of love, a love in which the cafés also played their part when the hour of a quarter to eight brought its delicious relaxation with it.

By this unpremeditated departure I saw her, on the contrary, freed, in more peaceful possession of herself even than before, and gone for ever from me. It was still daylight and the only stars those of the trams, when I began to realize how complete was my subjection and how sudden an end had been put to my happiness, and that this state of affairs would go on even after sunset. Why this sudden departure, leaving no trace? Was not Spain barred to her? Or had she perhaps concealed the truth from me and set out for Italy and a mad round of excitements, or for America from a desire either for self-effacement or for notoriety?

It was indeed towards Spain that she had gone, for on the following day I received a postcard

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from the frontier. On it were depicted the docks of Port-Vendres with a row of large casks and a view of the town hall above which rose a fort. On the back of the card were these words : " The decree of Fate," the proud Spanish brevity of which was spoilt by the fact that the handwriting was that of a servant girl and by the ending : *A greeting from Port-Vendres*. I hoped that Remedios had been unable to cross the frontier. But a few days later Pacifico told me that she had reached Barcelona.

Paris was flooded by an enervating November rain in which houses were reflected right up to the roof in the asphalt. The spray round the shades of the street lamps broke into a sort of pink dust. Along the soaking pavements the stunted trees bore the full brunt of the wind. The sound of noisy torrents beneath the roads came from the outfalls of the sewers at night. The need I felt for Remedios did not cease, nor did it even diminish. Our first meetings seemed now to have been specially arranged by destiny to ensure that at any rate our two lives should not remain

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apart for ever. I went over in my mind all the circumstances of our acquaintance. In the beginning I had loved her voice, coarsened by public meetings, her short hands, shorter still in their mittens, her murderer's thumb, her adventures in which lethargy always seemed to play a part, her escapade into anarchy ; then I had come to love the narrow limits of her ideas, the chronicle of her sufferings, her goodness and also the perpetual amusement afforded by her love of pleasure, her natural sense of duty and the rebelliousness which made her swerve continually from the path of her destiny. I conjured her up again, irresponsible, romantic and always smiling. Was it possible that our meeting was merely one of those incidents which, judging from their results, Remedios accused of uniting against her peace of mind, declaring them at the same time to be inevitable ? Everything began to hold evil omens ; the shape of the clouds and of coffee-grounds began to be unfavourable. The loneliness of the evenings, and even of the mornings which were too brilliant for me to submit to Fate and to live sensibly, urged me to

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follow her. The newspapers announced grave reactionary measures in Catalonia. I could not bear the thought that, all because of me, Remedios was perhaps hurtling headlong towards disaster, and I in my turn took the evening express.

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I am in a circus with an arena of sand, an unbroken beach in which the forces of sunlight and shadow hold equal sway. Above is a circus of blue sky across which the fierce sun moves without encountering the outspread cape of a single cloud. A dense crowd is suspended midway between these two empty circuses, like a frame of dark wood dividing two mirrors which reflect each other. The countless pale smudges of the closely packed faces quiver in the heat-haze which makes individual sounds vibrate and unite into a single harmony. Can one of these smudges, one of these sounds, be Remedios? It is the Fiesta de la Prensa and on the glaring posters we are promised eight Sotto-mayor bulls. In the space of an hour the town has emptied itself into this Moorish basin. I carefully scan the tiers, stripping them like a

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maize-cob. I dismantle the circus of everything that is not a brilliant, eloquent mouth, a shapely body moulding a silk dress and two eyes as open as a book. Are you there, Remedios, you precious thing, you indispensable object? Perhaps, but not recognizable, because you are no longer that preposterous and provoking figure, that tongue of flame which one would have picked out instantly from a grey Parisian crowd; here you are merely one of these thousand pliant glimmering lights, one of these bodies satiated with siestas, puffed out with sweetmeats, swayed by religion and superstition, a Spanish woman.

One sees the guardia civil in their top boots, the military band in alpargatas. In his box the president is holding forth to some women who remind one of sweets. He casts his gestures to the crowd like handfuls of halfpence. Piercing whistles rise up and dwindle gradually away again. Then the president rises. So violently does he wave his handkerchief that it starts the brazen notes of a trumpet into life. The trumpet in turn sets in motion the gate of the toril, revealing a dark

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passage at the end of which is a glimmer of blue sky.

The bull has come out into the light. Bewildered, he stops at the edge of the shadow. His coat is dirty, his flanks are mottled. His horns are covered with plaster from the walls. He is alone, the single point on which the two halves of the ring are strained like bows. He is attracted by a horse kicking against the barrera. He trots towards it. It is a decrepit old grey screw. Its stomach is patched like a poor man's coat and its legs totter beneath the weight of the upholstered picador flourishing his lance. The bull halts for a moment and bellows; then, attracted by the greasy glitter of the steel which menaces him, he charges, his muzzle close to the ground. The lance enters between his shoulders, bends like a rapier and breaks. A thrust from his hindquarters and his horns penetrate the horse's stomach with a squelching sound. The horse appears to jump; it remains suspended in the air, its legs apart, whilst the bull, blinded with blood, gores its stomach. Then the horse crashes down like an

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old wall, burying its rider who is hampered by his horsehair armour. From the midst of the harness and entrails the picador's head emerges. His hat with its gaudy rosettes has fallen off revealing the fat face of a terrified monk, glistening with sweat. The horse scrambles up and staggers off, shedding its bowels round the arena. Other horses are lying beside the barrera; the absence of saddles accentuates the prominence of their bones. Their yellow teeth are showing.

Remedios? Not one of those fans is cooling that beloved neck into which, in Paris, her veil used to dig so deep a furrow. No eyebrow is as plastered down as hers, which she used to smooth with a little brush for glazing pastry. None of the women round me possess that husky voice which enthral me so. Remedios is not here. Remedios cannot bear the sight of blood.

The bull now becomes the prey of men dressed in silver, arranged in a row like chessmen. One after the other they spread their wings, set flight and settle before the crimson horns. One sways his hips in his cape, his foolish pink stockings

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emerging from below the skirt thus formed. Another holds up a bright cape spotted with dried blood stains. He drags this cape along the ground like a net and then spreads it out like a curtain. The curtain parts and behold ! A man has flashed across the sun, leaving in the bull two pairs of banderillas decorated with tin foil, silver flowers from the roots of which the blood bubbles, already turning black.

The bull is getting slow. He is now the property of the man dressed in gold. From the crowd there gradually rises a low rumbling growl which the first clever pass will break into a thousand separate sounds. The killer is a small man. His hair resembles the patent leather of his pumps. The bull shreds the red cloth and the man's silk sleeves. He gets weary, his head drops lower and lower to the earth on which he slowly slobbers. The man retires three paces, wipes the sweat from his blue and yellow face and throws off his hat with a theatrical toss of his head ; he is bald. He rises up on tiptoe like a tenor. A sudden momentary effort and a backward leap ; he waits, hands

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on hips ; a smile wrinkles his thin cheeks. He signs to the crowd to keep themselves in check for a moment. The bull recedes obliquely, his muzzle in the sand ; his legs bend ; he falls on his knees. His feet stiffen and his head falls backwards.

The president awards the ear.

Nothing remains in the empty arena but a trampled place with a jumble of footprints and hoofmarks round a dark stain.

Is it the aniseed-perfumed afternoon, my love-privation, or this harrowing butchery that makes me feel so sick ?

My search lasted two days. At last I got Remedios' telephone number from the Socialist Institute. Her voice ! She made an appointment to meet me at seven o'clock next morning in the outskirts of the town.

I tried to sleep, without success. My window looked out over a flat boulevard bedecked with palm trees. Children played there until two in the morning, digging with their spades in the

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electrically lit sand beneath the street lamps, enjoying themselves in the middle of the night of which other European children only know the borders. Electric signs flickered. A soap advertisement traced its crimson path across a house-front and effaced itself, only to return an instant later to greet one in blue and then in green, just as theatrical stars take each call before the curtain wearing a different shawl. Above this domestic conflagration the fortress of Montjuich pursued its relentless vigil from the top of its rock, swept four times every minute by the lighthouse.

When three o'clock struck, the square was empty. The trente et quarante rooms still glowed on the first floors. I caught glimpses of chandeliers and parquet floors. Some of the players came out on the balconies whilst the cards were being shuffled and leant their elbows on the plush-covered rails. In the streets below the cabmen were also playing cards in their carriages. With the first signs of dawn above the horizon, even the hairdressers in whose shops the customers had been suffering a kind of cosmetic trepanning, covered up their hot

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water apparatus, and the town entered on a brief period of rest.

A little later a taxi came to take me to the Parque de Vich where Remedios had asked me to meet her. On the Plaza de Colón the confraternity of beggars was sleeping, each member stretched out on two iron chairs. There were about a hundred of them, their faces black, their feet wrapped in evening papers, under the pachydermatous palm-trees, scratching themselves even in their dreams. Amongst them 'a gentleman in a dinner jacket with a flower in his button-hole, having decided against going home, was snoring with his mouth open.

The carriage passed through the *parque Guëll*, the quarter inhabited by rich cotton-brokers. To tell the truth I was not sure that I was yet awake. It was an endless series of villas twisted like marsh-mallow stalks, lit by windows which resembled chain-armour, railed off by metallic seaweed and zinc creepers painted green or pale pink. Under corrugated iron roofs sagged indiarubber houses, pierced by gaping doors through which the road

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seemed to continue, rising in a gentle slope to the roofs. At their sides the porters' lodges bulged like tumours and chimneys rose like veins swollen with varicocoele at the tops of walls where rabbit-fishes were fighting in thickets of wrought-iron irises. Then, the imagination of the architects having apparently come to an end, the avenues no longer existed except in their name plates, hidden amongst the featureless country. Here and there between the market gardens a private house still thrust up its silhouette of a mounted gun, with its burnt almond stucco, bristling with burr-stones, looking like unappetising praliné cakes. At last the carriage came to a halt before a tiled terrace decorated with china fruits on the top of twelve staggering cromlechs. This platform must also have served as a roof, for pierced japanned pipes reminding one of pepper pots sprouted from it like trees. I penetrated along the path which wriggled like a severed worm and I reached, in spirals, the chess-board summer house where Remedios was waiting for me, smiling amongst the aloes. She looked as though she had nothing on beneath her

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lilac dust coat from Valentin's, the rubber king. The sky was reflected in her oiled hair. She turned her great eyes to me and pursing up her lips in that barren kiss which is called a *prof*, she said :

“ Well, simpático, are you satisfied ? ”

“ It's like a dream, I adore you so.”

She patted my shoulder and then my back with her hand, showing her delight at seeing me in the Spanish fashion, in one of those embraces which one still sees in classic comedy at the Théâtre-Français.

“ How can I ever tell you,” she said, “ the sacrifice I am making in going back on my resolution ? You have come at a terrible moment, when I ought to see no one, but providence . . . This is the Parque de Vich, given to the town by a Catalonian who made his fortune in Chili. A mixture of Bagatelle and Luna Park. You must admit it is idyllic with its banks, its aloes and its powdered glass designs ; in the evening a steam orchestra plays in the grotto. I am happy here ; as in the well-known tango :—

‘ I wish I were a bee, to die among the flowers.’

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Instead of that one must always be fighting. Oh ! yes, I don't mind admitting to you that I wasn't made for that sort of thing. I am the secretary of the Party and honorary president with Anatole France of a League of Freedom, in addition to being traveller, lecturer and propagandist. But what I really love, you know, is to be able to lunch in my dressing gown, to have a maid and keep birds, to have the hair-dresser in every day, to sleep in the shelter of two strong arms, to drink my chocolate in bed, to go to the cinema at the apéritif hour, the *función-vermouth* as we say, to dine with my sisters amongst my nephews and nieces and to find a bowl of roses at my bedside when I go home. I have never admitted this to anyone else ; take it with you as a secret to the grave. You must go now. I can't be sure I haven't been followed even though I came straight here after getting up. Take the train back to France this evening."

"I came here to see you."

She became insistent.

"There is going to be a general strike in Barcelona at any moment, perhaps even to-morrow.

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All foreigners will be suspect ; people will be mercilessly shot. I can't say more than that."

"My only desire, Remedios, is to love you, and my only mistake is to want to seduce you. If I am plunged into danger with you it won't be from imprudence or gallantry or facetiousness on my part, but because the need of being near you keeps me here."

Having said this, I took her into my arms.

She deposited face-powder and dried cosmetic on my clothes, grew sentimental and put on her spectacles.

From the summit of this calvary of 'ours with its border of fantastic shrubbery amongst which beds of heliotrope were laid out in the form of the insignia of the order of Alfonso XII, between the embrasures adorned with breast plates, the town appeared in the tense atmosphere, fined down like a model in an architectural exhibition. A thick haze hung over the sea and joined it to the sky. The funicular railway began to move ; a dynamo purred somewhere.

"You see the awakening of Barcelona," said

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Remedios, "with her luxurious houses, her peaceful tramways, her civic amenities, all eloquent of her industry; but you have not seen her in her hours of bloodshed, with her torn-down shutters, her twisted and broken pipes, and just beneath my window, caressed by the sun, a single blot—the body of a little girl killed as she was leaving school, stretched on the ground, her head covered with flies." When she was carried away by her subject little silver bubbles blew from her mouth and floated for a moment in the sunlight.

"Yes, *mono*. Less than a year ago it began with a meeting of protest against the despatch of reservists to Morocco, that cancer which gnaws at the vitals of Spain. Opposite the station over there on the right, from which smoke is rising as from a cauldron, a watch was kept from the sinister windows of the Capitanía General. The rails had been torn up to prevent the arrival of reinforcements from Valencia and Madrid. It was a Wednesday. Paving stones were being taken up and trees taken down. At midday the sack of the convents began. The first one was that

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of San Martín de Provensals, if I remember rightly. Puig, who had gone out at dawn, had not returned. At midnight I ventured out. The populace was converging towards the centre of the town, after rifling the armouries. I found out that Puig was remaining permanently at the syndicalist headquarters.

“ The churches of Maristes, San Antonio, San Pablo, the convents and the parish churches were burning one by one. Forty-nine were roasted in this way. Machine guns swept the city from the top of the statue of Columbus. The infantry refused to fire. The Jesuits of Sarrià, that barrack-like building over there by the gasometer, defended themselves with rifles. At length the batteries of Montjuich trained their guns on the revolutionary party. From my room I heard muffled reports, the explosion of hidden syndicalist or clerical bomb stores. Then the reinforcements arrived. General Santiago had appalling notices put up. There was a stampede and the ringleaders made for the Pyrenees. At last the detonations died down and ceased altogether. . . . Barcelona became once more as you see it there, a city of wealth and vice,

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the town of child prostitution, obscene photographs and 'fancy goods,' preserving the spirit of the Inquisition behind a screen of electric signs, with its fortified convents and banks, its patchwork houses with their strong-room doors and their cellars protected by bars, of which those which keep the poor from the confessionals are but gilded replicas. In the meantime Puig had been arrested and imprisoned up there.

"They had got him. They had at last laid their hands on this dangerous anarchist. No civil lawyer was allowed to cross the threshold of his cell. And yet you remember the indignation of Europe and the way in which every lover of justice had his eyes focussed on that dungeon in which the greatest heart in the world was waiting without weakening for a single moment. Socrates, Christ, the Chevalier du Barreau, Bismark, Ravachol, all the great adventurers into the realm of thought, have met their death like that. As for me, I never saw him again alive. Puig wrote to me every day, I know, but I never got his letters. I was myself placed secretly in a cabin of the *Pelayo*, that

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old cruiser which sleeps its crocodile sleep in the harbour basin, ready at any moment to serve as a gaol.

“Look, they are decking it with flags. To-day triumphal arches of silver paper will be erected all over the town. This evening there will be a candle in every window, for the King is coming to-morrow to review the troops who are going to Tetuan. Everything is beginning all over again, and will go on until the time when . . .”

An appetising domestic smell of chocolate rises in the morning air.

Remedios sucked her pendant with a far-away look. Then she went on speaking, as though in a dream :

“Puig was put into the chapel at six o’clock in the evening. All night long he remained awake, refusing to kneel, standing between two brothers of Charity. . . . He died shot in the back. For another whole day he remained on view in his black deal coffin, his head swathed in bandages, his face bloodless, and a wound in his throat plugged with lime.”

Suddenly she threw her arms round my neck :

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“ What a little ragamuffin I am, aren't I ? ”

I went to the window to open it, but Remedios threw herself on the curtain and pulled it right across.

“ Is that because of the man who is patrolling up and down outside ? ” I asked.

For some time I had noticed that a very tall man with a stoop and a complexion like fine porcelain framed in a beard was watching us.

“ Yes, that is José Salt.”

“ Police ? ”

“ No.”

“ Jealous ? ”

“ It's rather sad. Salt was formerly professor of history at the Institute. He was one of Puig's most ardent supporters and served him with intelligence, envy and vanity. I in my turn took a class, as you know, and became Puig's companion. Salt fell in love with me and lost his peace of mind. He spied on us, followed us about, plagued us with anonymous letters, probably denounced us to the police, in short became such a nuisance that Puig, in spite of his gentleness and self-control, had a

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quarrel with him, with the result that Salt had to leave the Institute. He was in the Argentine when the trouble occurred. I found him here on my return, avoiding me, dedicating poetry to me. He is lecturing again—the preachings of a visionary which no one listens to—passes his nights in churches and takes cocaine. Yesterday he came up to me in the street and asked me to live with him; when I tried to move away he swore that to-morrow he would put a bomb inside a bouquet of the flowers I like best and throw it from a window into the King's carriage on his return from the review."

"That is the sort of romantic application that makes anarchy intolerable. Anarchy should above all be an exact science. But Spaniards have lost all sense of the fitness of things since they have given up the study of theology."

"It is quite true, *amor simpático*. You talk like a chaffinch."

I suddenly heard my neck crack; against my lips I found teeth which were not my own. A heat greater than that of the mid-day sun pervaded me. I couldn't breathe; close to my eyes I saw

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a single shining eye which gazed at me, gave me a feeling of intense discomfort, and went out.

"What has suddenly changed me like this?" asked Remedios after the kiss. "I can assure you it isn't a 'whim' on my part—that's what you say, what you do in Paris, isn't it? No. I've no desire for pleasure left. But you were so unhappy that I couldn't resist you. That is my weak spot."

"In the first place, I am that *animal triste* . . ."

"Yes, I felt that about you when we first dined together, and you let me ask the gipsy band to play the music of Lakmé. I remember :

It is that God is deserting us.

Just at the moment someone was cracking lobster claws. I felt it was my heart that was being crushed. You see, something goes on throbbing beneath all this. In France your votive offerings take the shape of election cards, academic palms and dentists' diplomas. In Spain, round the statue of the Virgin hang hearts, bunches of hearts . . ."

"Yes, and diseased eyes, tumours and, especially at Toledo, sexual organs, all modelled in wax."

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"In any case, why should I invoke the Fates when we are together again? We have been separated for so long . . ."

"And you have got thinner," I continued flatteringly.

"Then you will love me always?"

"Of course."

"I should like you to be a cat," said Remedios, playing with my watch-chain. "You would never leave me then. In the daytime you would be put into a little basket and in the evening I would take you out and you would become a man again."

Her satin blouse is covered with big childish spots and has a sailor collar with a white crêpe de Chine scarf. I feel I want to bite her toes to stop them swinging to and fro. What numberless seated ancestors she must have had to be what she is! Except for the flies we are alone in the tea shop. Half a Dutch cheese, like a severed breast, shares its glass cover with a raw ham which smells of tallow and is turning black.

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"When are we going on with our lessons? The irregular verbs?"

Remedios studies the lines round my eyes. I no longer see anything but her round powdered nose protruding from her plump face.

"I think you are hypersensitive," she explained, "and capable of very deep affection. You ought to get to know me better. Personally I am hyper-neurotic."

All the same I open the window, so that she can call for help if I try to kill her.

"You cannot often have been accused of coldness of heart," she said. "And at the same time you are not very demonstrative."

Her body is too long and from it she emits a sigh which fills the whole room.

Beyond the pavement is an imitation wharf. Barcelona is a monstrous town. All the women who go past seem to have thick eyelids and large thighs; they are followed by thin Jesuits who go along in threes, holding each other's little fingers. In the background there is the inevitable Montjuich, a sheer rock with palms growing out of its

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crevices like hairs and dotted with little houses clinging on like limpets. The view from the other window consists of a woman selling dyed feathers and, in the distance, the modern cathedral of Soller, with its four reinforced concrete towers and its merry-go-round organ. Remedios is dwindling. She is becoming just an ordinary companion. That display of authority by which she asserted herself in Switzerland and France has gone. Her own country tones her down. Is that the reason she no longer wanted a country of her own? She used to be the personification of glory and love. But now she has become comfortable; cheerful and docile; a kind of domestic article. She has eyes for no one but me and her looks seem to say: "After all one must live, so why not enjoy one's life?" She forgets the dead in the living, and uses her old expression: "Her sacrifice" to excuse herself. She really believes it, too; and not altogether without reason. I am only annoyed that I cannot be grateful to her for it. Or is it her spotted blouse and the white crêpe de Chine scarf that irritate me? How she used to attract

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me in Paris in her mourning ! (There was, for instance, the silver veil she kept for interviews.) She climbed up the rue Saint-Jacques as though it were a Calvary. What a crowd of idlers were always after her ! I thought, as one always does, that I had found something quite extraordinary. To-day, without hypocrisy to myself, just as without any irony towards her . . .

“ Let’s take the funicular up to the Tibidabo this evening,” she said. “ I’ll bring Trick and we can dine à la carte. The view stretches as far as the Palma lighthouse. I will rest my head softly on your shoulder and we will be wafted to the country of conventional dreams, in which heroism does not exist. I will bring a nightdress.”

Her black jet earrings silently nodded their acquiescence.

I had room number 217. It was a new room and smelt of glue. A blackbeetle crawled leisurely across the carpet. Someone had left an ace of clubs in one of the drawers. I ordered dinner for two. At that moment there was an explosion in the distance.

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The electric light went out and I lit three candles.

I opened the window. It looked out over a courtyard from which rose the smell of *bisque d'écrevisse* and soap-suds. I counted the flowers on the counterpane, rubbed up the tarnished bottles of my dressing-case on the curtains and put my slippers away. Lastly, I placed some flowers in a waterless vase as they do on the stage.

Remedios wants me to be a cat in a little basket. She has promised to give me a cigarette-case with an enamelled cover representing a fair nude female on the sea-shore. For some obscure reason she has had the bust of Estebán Puig with its gouged-out eyes brought to my hotel, wrapped in oil-cloth. I have had to put it under my bed. What am I to do? One must either live alone or take people as one finds them. Why do the Spanish newspapers devote the whole of their front pages to obituary notices? There is something so sinister in their daily lament.

I make new resolutions. I must be more enthusiastic. I must be more carried away, more emotional. Perhaps I should exhibit chronic

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ardour. How exquisite, how radiant Remedios is !

Tired of waiting for her, I dined alone. Every twenty minutes the funicular announced its arrival by a jar which made the mountain shake, followed by a noise of rushing water. Then my anxiety redoubled. I strained my ears. But Remedios was still not in that one. I dared not try to explain her lateness to myself or to think of what would happen if she did not come at all, out of fear of arousing hostile forces which would prevent her from reaching me. I wanted Remedios with all my heart and I longed to see her safe with me between these four smooth sanatorium walls. I forgot that on that very morning I would have given anything to be back in Paris.

Gradually I compelled myself to believe that Remedios would certainly not come, but that I should pass just as good a night stretched diagonally or right across the bed.

The hotel was 800 metres above the sea-level. The sounds of country life had not yet begun there and the hum of the town was too far away to reach me. Either would have lulled me into a sleep

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which was denied me and there was nothing left for me to do but to wait.

I lay down fully dressed. Towards two in the morning my neighbours, who had been carrying on an excited conversation for hours without a stop, sent for a steak and a bottle of manzanilla. Then a child began to cry, heralding the dawn. Another child answered it.

I had left the door ajar and I thrilled to every sound. A hundred times I dozed for a moment. The telephone bell kept ringing in the corridor, but the floor waiter drooping beneath a red lamp paid no attention to it. The panels of the imported English furniture kept cracking all through the night. Every time I started up I saw the other pillow lying there swollen and cold and the infinitely big room, lit only by the moon which an obliging mirror, deflected on to the dusty water of a fire bucket.

Then, suddenly, I sank into sleep.

It was not till the following morning that I heard of the outrage and the arrest of Remedios.

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THE Orient Express was bearing its tri-weekly public through the night. It was the same public as usual. French dressmakers and modistes (the difference is merely one of age) were returning to Constantinople after re-stocking; at Laroche the perfumes of Paris disappeared to make room for the clinging fragrance of the East—rose and powdered bergamot. Wives of Indian Civil Servants staggered about the corridor with six fair-haired babies who would forget what it was like to sleep in a cot until they reached Bombay. During the halts, Staff Officers with their military police caps paced the platform with short stiff authoritative strides. The French officers' chests disappeared beneath their load of decorations. The Englishmen slept late and,

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whistling all the time, occupied the lavatories until the supply of water and towels was exhausted. And lastly, the Hispano-Jewish families from Salonica, returning from Vichy where their complexions had been cleared, remained in their bunks all day, sitting cross-legged on the unmade beds, whilst flasks of chianti suspended from the electric lamp brackets swung to and fro. And then everyone fell asleep to the chant of the axles accompanied by a sound like that of steel castanets. Snores. People thumped the mahogany partitions to frighten the bugs back. The conductor slumbered at the end of the corridor, seated on a cushion stuffed full of contraband in the shape of leis, lire, dinars, drachmæ and pounds Turkish, to say nothing of the precious stones which he carried wrapped in little pieces of paper beneath his alpaca tunic.

The train roused the Gothic Swiss stations into life, rattling the glass in their windows. The Simplon gave a grand symphony recital in iron for twenty-nine minutes and then, following the main roads, we passed through the rice-fields of Piedmont until we reached a large station ending in

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nothing, in that huge cistern of shadow and silence which is Venice. In the morning a cold blast like a sheet of zinc mowed down the maize of the Croatian plains. Servia was heralded by a herd of pigs, striped black and white like jockeys and devouring the framework of a railway waggon of which nothing but the wheels and the alarm signal remained, upside down in a ditch. We passed from river to river, crossing them by bridges as pliant as wickerwork, whilst beside them emerged the pile of the old bridges beheaded in the various retreats. At Vinkovcze the velvety Roumanians were extracted from the train into the frosty night. After Sofia came the houses covered with drying pimentos, brothers to the virgin vines in the fields. Lit by the rising sun, tilled by oxen, the Bulgarian plains affected a symbolic prosperity such as one finds in the designs on postage stamps and on the reverse of coins. And at last, after crossing the Thracian desert, under a sky full of stars in which our eyes accustomed to Western constellations sought in vain the North Star and no longer recognized the Plough which, level with the horizon, now took a

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terrestrial orbit, in a breach in the Byzantine wall, the Sea of Marmora spread before us.

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The boat did not sail till the next morning, so I had to spend a night in the town. The Hotel was intolerable, peopled by sickly faces, loose-lipped mouths, squat noses, receding chins, dusty black eyelids and the keen eyes of Pera. The orchestra kept going off like a rocket, playing waltzes to the smoking-room divans hung with sham Bokhara carpets, to the mosque lamps made of soda-water bottles and to the Greek General Staff, anglo-maniac in their kilts, all gold lace and black hair. Jewish boy-scouts attended to the revolving doors. I was told that the Russian restaurants were the best places at which to dine. There were about half a dozen of these from which to choose, all quite recently opened by Southern Russian refugees and where the waiting was done by ladies. I chose the Restaurant Feodor at the end of a passage in the main street of Pera. On the second floor in a low room, a film composed of smoke, din and alcohol in which the draught made by new arrivals scooped

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curious hollows, hung above the heads of the customers, dividing the room horizontally in two. Blue and mauve lamps hung from the ceiling ; on the walls, fresco-painted by a Russian artist, Moscow Society was depicted strutting, derisively be-fezed, beneath conventional palm-trees, whilst women danced to an orchestra of monkeys led by a white bear in a cap and blouse with a 'cello. Above the smoke rose the head of the proprietor, the ex-manager of the Kieff Theatre. He remembered Chaliapine in his box at Covent Garden, glass in hand, singing the Marseillaise on the occasion of his last appearance on July 29th, 1914, and by his stature reminding one of Russia as she was represented at the side of Montenegro in the Almanach Hachette.

Under the impalpable roof the company was engaged in drinking ; a few Englishmen and a few Perots, but mostly Russians. The manageress, an ex-dancer of the Imperial ballet, frozen into an ermine cloak and wearing a necklace of pink pearls, welcomed the guests at the door. A Roumanian orchestra cast czardas round their heads like soft

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nooses. The waitresses, little accustomed to standing, were seated at the tables. They carried dishes, gave orders and took them, with a quiet distinction which betrayed their breeding. Now and then one surprised them in an ease of manner, an affectation of speech or some elegantly expressed gesture which one is accustomed to see servilely performed, and which attracted attention.

At a table not far distant some men were drinking bottles of Greek champagne which, having been well shaken on their travels, shot their corks to the ceiling with a terrific explosion. A tin about a foot high and filled with fresh caviare completed the repast. An officer afflicted with an eight days' beard, wearing his badges of rank pinned to his waisted overcoat, was being entertained by a party of jaded, mean, showy men who looked like absconding lawyers, whilst a handsome lady with curly hair, wearing in her ears golden acorns which hung down to her shoulders, was putting salt into the ice pail. Then a lady in evening dress who had her back to me, said in good French : " And now what are we going to eat ? " with so much authority

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that I took her to be the hostess of the party. But when the dish was decided upon, instead of calling someone she took a counterfoiled pad from her pocket and set to work to write down the order with a pencil fastened to her belt. She was in the position of being at the same time the guest and the servant.

When she rose from the table, pushing back her chair to go into the kitchen she turned towards me.

"Anna Valentinovna," I cried, "you here!"

"Good evening," she said cheerfully. "What a curious meeting! How long have you been in Constantinople?"

"Two hours."

In spite of raising her voice at the end of her sentences she did not convey the impression of being really surprised at our meeting. She seemed, just as long ago on the steps of the Hotel, to be waiting for me to take her for a walk, her stick under her arm, pulling on her gloves and keeping her dog off with her foot.

"I am a refugee," she said, stretching her hands out to me in a gesture of poverty. "A wanderer for eighteen months and here since last spring.

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As for you, you look as if you were pretty firmly on your feet. Look at mine. My boots are made of goose-skin with tin soles. Does Theotocopouli still carry on in the Rue Fontaine? I still owe him for a hundred and thirty pairs!"

"But, do explain . . ."

"'One never explains,' as Tuchef said:—

'One cannot judge Russia rationally; one can only believe in her.'

"All the same, I can tell you the bare facts. But before I do that you must leave your table, which isn't one of mine. The Countess Strakhoff looks after this one."

"Marika," she said to a dark young woman with an artificial complexion and her neck tightly compressed into a black bodice, "allow me to take one of your customers to my table. He is an old Biarritz acquaintance whom I want you to know."

The Countess Strakhoff, after wiping her fingers on her apron, offered me a slim hand on the thumb of which sparkled a diamond and which I kissed. It was the custom of the Restaurant.

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We took a table. I told Anna how overjoyed I was at seeing her again and that I loved her just as much as ever ; but she reproached me for taking advantage of her misfortunes.

“ Impetuous, sensuous and serious, like all Frenchmen. Passionate and steadfast, but teasing even whilst they make love, and always amusing ! It’s five years since anyone has fed my wretched body with nourishment of that kind,” she added, tapping her arm with the handle of my knife.

An English officer asked for his bill and she got up.

“ Anyone would think that you had been brought up to this sort of thing.”

“ I am a female Russian. A nation of fools, we can accustom ourselves to anything and in the long run we are very daunting to evil prophets. We do not clench our fists and set our jaws to battle with the gods as the English do ; nor do we accept Fate as you do, with a full understanding but a bad grace. It is a bore to have to wait on people, but not more so than being waited upon and dancing every evening at the Hôtel du Palais.”

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"A charming picture. April 1914. The storm on the Rock of the Virgin and the waves which broke right up to that huge corner suite where you lived with your mother. By the way, how is Madame la Comtesse?"

"She died of typhus a year ago in the Turkish fever hospital on Princes' Island. Thirty-five members of my family have gone. I have lost everything, even my independence and the life close to nature which consoles one for everything; my only distraction now is the contemplation of my misfortune, the one thing which is quite real and which, with that of my companions, creates around me a great mournful and crazy cacophony which enables me to get through the day . . . There are also blackbeetle races and the daily list of suicides. But all this is very uninteresting.

"At the time of mobilization we returned to our Parmenikoff estate in the province of Tula, with its well-built brick house under a green roof. Farming, grouse-shooting, bandage-making, reading; at night outside in the snow amongst the birch-trees, huge fires and the sound of horses. The

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revolution made very little difference to our lives. The soldiers returned from the Front in bunches, on the roofs of trains. Those who avoided being crushed to death in the tunnels divided our lands amongst them. It was not until 1918 that things became bad. The effects of revolution are very capricious, like those of lightning. Although my brother was an officer in the Imperial Guard, my mother and I were not ill-treated, whilst five versts away Prince Samarine, who is here and with whom I live, saw his niece buried alive and his nephew torn to pieces with pitchforks. Early one morning some deserters led by a sergeant-major of the Red Army demanded admission to Parmenikoff. I jumped out of bed, seized my pearl necklace and threw it amongst the ashes in the stove. I hid my rings and those of my mother in my powder box.

“ ‘ Anna Valentinovna, be good enough to hand over to me all the plate and all the ready money you possess.’

“ I obeyed.

“ ‘ Swear to me on the ikons that you have handed everything over.’

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“ I swore.

“ ‘ Now give me your jewels.’

“ I placed some unimportant jewellery, some bracelets and some paste hair ornaments in his fur cap.

“ ‘ Swear to me that you have handed everything over.’

“ I was on the point of swearing. But the sergeant-major was looking at me. I turned my eyes away.

“ ‘ They are in pawn,’ I said.

“ He smiled and did not insist.

“ Would you believe that at that moment my only regret was for my christening cup, a silver gilt one with the Kremlin on it in white enamel on a blue ground, and my little French spoons ?

“ ‘ Could I not prevail upon your kindness,’ I said bravely, ‘ to let me keep my christening cup and my little French spoons ? ’

“ The sergeant-major gave them back to me, kissed my hand, removing an uncut emerald from my first finger as a preliminary, and politely withdrew.

“ A month later the country was over-run by people in flight before the Czecho-Slovaks. They

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laid waste as they went. We had to abandon everything at two hours' notice. From that time onward every place was barred to us ; we were beset on all sides by enemies. I only experienced one moment of really great joy ; that was the entry of Denikin's army into Kieff. What a sight that was ! The Cossacks marched past on their glossy horses, flour was distributed, the town was decorated, even the Polish refugees sang, to the accompaniment of concertinas played by sailors ; that day we really thought that Russia was delivered. After that, lack of discipline, disorder, difficulties behind the line . . . What can you expect ? It's always like that with us."

"What about Wrangel ?"

"Certainly. But he has no money. My brother who is serving in his army only gets ten thousand roubles a day. How can he live on that ? He has no boots and lives on raw onions. Stefan Bazaroff, the officer at the table at which I was having supper when you came in, was a colonel at the Preobrazhensky. He has washed up dishes at Yalta since then. In spite of his chased silver

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cartridge pouches and his topaz-handled daggers, he has no shirt and wears his uniform next to his skin. Well, we remained in Odessa until the Bolsheviks came and then a British cruiser took us to Princes' Island. I went down with typhoid there and nearly died.

"We have nothing left. I have got this old silver rouble hung round my neck on a ribbon. Anastasia, who speaks twelve languages and is a graduate of the Institute of Philology of Moscow, sells American matches in the streets. I have not slept in sheets for two years . . ."

She said all this in a querulous voice, but only conventionally so, and no really painful memory seemed stirred by the recital. At times she even seemed pleased to have paid this mysterious penalty.

The orchestra was playing *Phi-Phi*. Submerged by its harmony the first violinist raised his head like a drowning man to keep himself afloat for a moment above the deluge of sound.

"You've got a royal flush and yet you hesitate!"

Some toothless card players in lambskin coats were slamming their cards down on to the table.

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Anna brought me a dish full of fruit and, standing before me picking grapes from a bunch, she went on speaking :—

“ All that I’ve been saying seems romantic to you. But everything in Russia is romantic, even happiness, even boredom. It is all a question of magnetism. And the women intensify this. They are mixed up in war, in politics, in espionage, in business. You find them in the retinues of generals, in the offices of cabinet ministers, in the woods, in the prisons, on the rivers, and unlike Frenchwomen they do not use their influence to bring still more common sense and economy into man’s existence. As soon as we appear, everything at once flies to extremes. Look at Constantinople : the misery there is unbelievable and yet expenditure is madder than ever ; they drink, cheat, quarrel, die and do business with a skill and knavery which astonish even Pera.”

I pretended, in order to cheer her up, to foresee the end of the present régime.

“ Yes,” she said, “ one day perhaps we shall return to Russia . . . perhaps . . . ”

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That gentle word took on in her mouth a silky, far-away intonation. It did not put a burden on the future, but underlined it with a stroke as faint as that with which the tops of blue fir trees underline the horizon, and created a mirage in which even, she herself was not deceived. Even concrete words underwent this astonishing transformation which Russian lips give them, became like the mere shadow of truth and lost all their force. One gradually began to fear that none of the things she said had ever really happened. A disconcerting language, Russian, in which even the grammar sets words free instead of tying them down, and which contains several past tenses each more and more remote from reality, until in the end one begins to doubt even the existence of yesterday.

“ Perhaps . . . ”

That word had been on her lips when we returned in the evening along the Adour in her hundred horsepower Fiat with its open body like that of a troika, which she drove with her hair streaming in the wind behind her. She was engaged to Vladimir Yermoloff whom she did not love, but who used to send her

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poems written in his own blood. I asked her to marry me but she said, "You must wait ; perhaps the moment will come. Everything is possible because everything carries in itself the germ of its own opposite."

I found her now just as she used to be, enveloped in a charm which fascinated one but which lost its effect a few feet away from her. One entered into the range of her vision as if into a bath, and her eyes were of the colour of water which is so clear that at a hundred strokes from the shore a swimmer can still distinguish the bed of the sea. I would willingly have left everything to follow her, when the war separated us.

"Anna, do you know I am married? And children . . ."

A troubled look which reminded me for a moment of the flaws one sees in emeralds came into her eyes. She turned her head away as Orientals do when you stare at them.

"You don't look like the father of a family. You'll always have the face of a child, I think . . . You see I was right when I told you that you would find happiness without me."

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"Alas! My heart is as chipped as a tramp's knife! Tell me what I can do for you, Anna."

"Nothing, thank you. I don't need anything. I am earning enough to be able to buy back my fur coat soon. It is in the hands of a Jew. When I get it back I shall have enough, by living on apples, to go to Paris by train, which is cheaper than going by boat. Paris seems to be the goal of all of us, doesn't it?"

"Won't you let me lend you your fare?"

"I have got it. Old Prince Samarine pawned my fur coat one night without my consent, to buy drink with. Sewn in the lining there are three City of Paris bonds for a thousand francs each, which I shall never get back if I mention the fact to the police."

"Let's go and get it at once."

I made enquiries. The pawnshop did not close until after midnight, remaining open until after the arrival in the roadstead of the last ships, from each of which customers would be sure to come to pawn some object to enable them to get the hundred francs or so necessary to pay for a bed until the morning.

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The curfew imposed by the High Commissaries did not ring till one o'clock, but Anna got leave to go before. As we left, the orchestra was playing a plaintive song which grew fainter and fainter like the voices of a receding crowd. The chorus was taken up by the whole assembly. The confusion of the tables, the ash on the table-cloths from the cigarettes with their long mouthpieces, the overturned glasses, the Angora cats which wandered from table to table, the electric fans churning the vitiated atmosphere, the imperfections of the piano, the whole scene of debauchery, faded before this solemn hymn chanted by Russian voices, which rose heavenwards like an exile's prayer.

"Russia cannot die," said Anna as we were leaving. "Perhaps at the present moment her misfortunes are forging a new soul for her, greater and more pure. The flower of our youth has been mown down but our children are growing in their stead. Look at the Russians in Constantinople, in Baku, in Vladivostock, in Sakaline. They are possessed by a fanatical patriotism. It doesn't take long nowadays to build up a powerful empire,

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and still less time to destroy it. He who is at the bottom to-day may be whirled to the top to-morrow. Don't forget that in Paris . . . But on second thoughts, no," she said, changing her mind; "I don't believe what I have been saying. Everything is destined to die; but that is only necessary in order that everything may be born afresh."

We had to go to Anna's lodgings to get the pawn ticket for her coat and her passport. She lived in the slums near the docks. Outside in the street the night was pitch black. The wind from the Black Sea swept down the Bosphorus with a vast whistling sound. Along the Petits-Champs Italian carabinieri, French gendarmes and red-capped British Military Police seemed, at the street corners, to be on the look out for some international malefactor whom no frontier could protect. As we descended towards the sea hideous little girls, bloated beneath their paint and powder, their bleached hair showing black at the roots, invited the passer-by to the "BAR DE LA BELLE CRÊTE." Huge gilt tramcars like lacquered chests hurried groaning along. At the top of the old Genoese

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Galata Tower one heard the crackling of the British Admiralty wireless.

"Who could have foretold," said Anna, "that I should find myself here, like this, with you? I have often thought of you. I knew I should see you again some day."

"I didn't."

We walked along shockingly paved roads full of refuse and lined with inns on the windows of which were painted the flags of the Allies and over whose doorways one saw the portrait of Venizelos dressed as a planter, with tinted spectacles. On the pavements Turks, heedless of the wind, were drinking coffee seated on old sofas which were shedding their horsehair through gaping wounds. Under the frosty light of a cinema a poster showed a motor-car going at full speed containing a lady bound hand and foot who was changing speed with her teeth. From the streets in which one read the notice "Out of bounds to French troops" came the wheezing of orchestrophones. A dromedary, loaded with vegetables and looking like some hairy bridge, blocked the way with its outstretched legs.

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Turkish houses built of satiny grey sycamore wood stretched their sagging roofs into the lit-up sky. Through a kind of pent house we passed into a cellar in which three people were taking their meal. A few months before they had been the three most powerful landowners in the province of Tula; Prince Samarine and his two sisters, Georgina and Aninka, Anna's cousins. The place smelt of alcohol and saltpetre mingled with that sickly Russian smell of cashmere and leather. The two old ladies-in-waiting of the Dowager Empress wore, pinned to their bodices, the ribbon of the Order of Catherine. They kept rabbits under their beds, bowed in prayer before the ikons their poor old heads which the English had shaved at Lemnos on account of the vermin, and ate out of cracked porringers with the family silver which they had saved from the wreck. Brutalized by what they had been through, their sallow faces appeared dimly in the light of the single candle which, stuck into a bottle, lit up the table.

"I want to go back to Russia," one of them kept saying, with querulous insistence.

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“ You can’t go back,” replied the other. “ They’ll chop your head off.”

She imitated a pair of scissors with her crossed hands and laughed.

• Prince Samarine offered me a chair with the affectation of a grand manner. He looked like a mobilized Saint Nicholas in his long British infantry coat with a big rosette of the Legion of Honour in his button-hole.

“ I beg that you will take tea with us, monsieur. I regret that I am unable to offer you any Napoleon brandy.”

I learnt his history later. When the Emperor Alexander died he left the Court and married a very rich and devout woman. Shortly after his marriage he feigned repentance and proposed to his wife that they should both retire into religious life, first making each other mutual heirs. She accepted the proposal. As soon as the convent gates closed on his wife, Samarine left his monastery where he had been careful to take no vows, brought a successful action claiming his wife’s property and betook himself to Paris where he spent twenty years in

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debauchery. He then returned to Tula, a ruined man, and lived on his two sisters in the country.

"Is Paris just as smart, just as wicked as ever, monsieur?" he asked. "'They tell me the fashion is set by Jews now. Look what they have brought *us* to. I tendered my resignation to the Jockey Club on the day Baron Gustav was elected. Those were good times, monsieur!"

The Alexander II samovar with the Samarine arms on it was singing.

"Good times, indeed! The lottery of the Arts décoratifs, the Molier circus, the victory of Fifine on June 5th, 1886, at Auteuil, the animal ball at Princess Sagan's. I went as a white rat. Monsieur de Germiny was priceless as a monkey. And Massa, waving his hand towards the company, said to me: 'All demi-mondsters and 'prize' bitches.' He had a devilish wit, that man!"

Anna got up to go, but the old man buttonholed me, breathing rum into my face.

"I hope, monsieur, that it shall never be said that a Samarine was satisfied with having given you such a reception. You must come to Kolovskaya

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on our estates. It won't be long before we are back. You shall drink some of the Tokay given to me by the Emperor Franz-Joseph ; you shall shoot my Chinese partridges and my Semmering pheasants and you will see my deer which are fed on human milk."

These memories touched a chord in the elder lady's brain and once more she took up her cry, " I want to go back to Russia ! "

And her sister, with the scissors motion of her hands, replied in her monotonous half-witted voice :—

" They'll chop your head off, Georgina ; they'll chop your head off."

We climbed back to Pera, Anna leaning on my arm and only visible every fifty yards at the street lamps, very white beneath her oilskin hat from under which appeared two tufts of curly red hair ; she wore a black knitted dress which made her look much slimmer and which her dust coat hardly covered.

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Was it really indifference or was it her anxiety not to inspire pity that seemed to absorb her misery ? Or was her apparent lack of sensitiveness the result of hardship and of the endlessness of her sorrows and of the tragedies she had witnessed ? I wanted to devote myself to her, to put off my departure in order to reconcile her with Fate. But she did not seem to desire any alleviation of her lot, and if I threw out any hint I found myself confronted by a secret purpose which became stronger at each assault.

Hawkers passed us with baskets on their backs full of grapes in the centre of which burnt candles which gave them the appearance of huge lanterns. At the Tunnel all the passers-by were being drawn towards a shop front.

"That is the Russian Press Bureau," said Anna. "There is the map of the Wrangel front."

Lit up by a row of electric lamps appeared a map of Southern Russia across which ran a thread passing through Elizabetgrad, Lozolavaya, Slaviansk, liberating the Crimea, the grain ports, the beginning of the Black Country, the mines.

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"We must have confidence in Wrangel and not abandon him," said Anna. "Look at all these people; they are only kept alive by their belief in him."

"You are preaching hope, Anna, and yet you have abandoned it yourself."

She sighed.

"For me, hope is dead," she replied.

The Russians were talking in groups, reading the despatches, talking of the latest boats arrived from the Crimea. They had all been leaning over the edge of that bottomless pit which is Red Russia and out of which nothing ever issues but screams, shots and the cracking of whips, without a single word from those who are shut up there and without a single ray of hope. Far into the night they loitered there out of idleness, gregariousness and their natural love of night, in strange disguises and fantastic clothes. Intellectuals in Turkish slippers, their hair matted with filth, pursued sophisms behind their iron-rimmed spectacles; a nondescript Slavonic household, sexless and ageless, with high-heeled shoes and pale grey suits darned at the

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knees, and followed by a King Charles spaniel worth a thousand pounds, were conversing in the voices of Russian cabmen ; and then the uniforms, if one could call them uniforms. Lancers in smocks and straw hats ; infantry with their regimental badges sewn on to the collars of frock-coats. A general in a sweater and a cycling-suit, with the cross of Saint George round his neck and his aged mother on his arm ; colonels of the Supply Service, their necks swathed in black silk scarves, were selling the *Sebastopol Gazette*. And nearly all of them wore that expression of the Oriental in which could be read neither boredom nor impatience nor sorrow, nothing but an overwhelming weariness.

Near the Press Bureau, at the entrance to a narrow passage, we stopped before a shop over which was written on a piece of calico : *Polack's Oriental Stores. Fashion Parlour. Wide selection of objets de luxe exported from Russia.* They were just shutting up. We slipped in under the iron shutter, already half down. Woolly haired and with blood-shot eyes, Polack and his sons were taking stock behind the counter by the light of a paraffin lamp.

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One was checking the advances made during the day on silver, pictures, lace, carpets, body linen, evening frocks—poor soiled pink rags which one saw hanging in the shadows. At the back of the shop furs hung in rows, a picture of wealth reminding one of the trophies of some colossal hunt. Ermine, yellow with age, lack-lustre sables, but mostly those men's fur coats of whose weight and appearance the Western mind has no idea.

Anna persuaded him in the end to give her back her otter-skin coat. The lining had not been tampered with, and the bonds were still there.

Her eyes dimmed.

"I want to thank you and yet I cannot forgive myself for trespassing on your kindness."

"Keep up your spirits, Anna. If you go to Paris, my friends will help you. And you must go and see my wife," I added, smiling; "you will both talk about me, just as in a Russian novel."

"I shall go to Paris for myself alone," said Anna. "It will be my last pleasure. For look," she said, and pointed out over the Golden Horn, beyond the Bosphorus and the sea, the path by which she

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had come. "I shall never go back there. I shall never see my country again. I would not do so if I could, for nothing of my former life can possibly remain. I am young, but no longer very young, and I know what I am saying. Since you are going to the East and are my friend, I can tell you, here on the steps of your hotel, that I am saying good-bye to you for ever. In Paris, I shall go to the Hôtel du Quai Voltaire because the Louvre is so regal in the autumn evenings towards five o'clock; I shall put a few family affairs in order; I shall go and see the church in the rue Pierre le Grand where I was baptized. The second week after my arrival will find me almost penniless. That is the moment when I intend to hang myself and to have done with the misery to which I have lived too close. I hope that you will think of me as I think of you. Good-bye."

With a wistful smile she left me, remaining for a moment in my vision, a deeper shadow on the darkness of the night.

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FROM the Hotel garden came the sound of cats quarrelling. A chow flew out barking and dispersed them and then came back, lolling out a blue tongue looking as though he had been devouring blackberries or fountain-pens. In the hall Isabelle's mother was waiting whilst her luggage was being loaded up, all topsy-turvy. She was a small woman, over-preserved by cucumber lotions and selfishness, the wrinkles on her face appearing to be gathered together and knotted behind her ears, and with her chest decorated by a string of imitation pearls, the marine originals of which she carried in her hand in a little crocodile-skin bag.

As soon as she saw me she cried out :—

“ I confide my daughter to your keeping ! Isa-

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belle won't come back home with me. She can't bear any form of compulsion. She is a creature of the air. Nothing matters to her. You who are clever and a responsible being, you must look after her. It's no use looking for her. She's no longer here. Gone without her maid, God knows where. She's taken nothing but a few bottles, a rug and a spiked stick to kill lizards with, saying that she expected nothing more from me and that my hypocrisy infuriated her. The girl drinks like a fish, and nothing but cheap liqueurs at that. Her life is spent in a kind of mad satisfaction of appetites just like in a dream. She takes not an atom of interest in the things that used to amuse us, hunt-balls, Hungarian needlework, spillikins and Venetian painting. Every thirty years the world casts a skin. 'When I was your age,' I told her, 'I had five children.' And all she replied was, 'It must have ruined your figure.' She cares nothing about dress. She has no social ambitions. She is fascinated by my scruples and my prejudices. She tries to extract amusement out of everything, but only in a spirit of derision. She is utterly ignorant. She has no artistic tastes.

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Nothing she writes means anything. Morally she simply doesn't exist. She is at the mercy of every circumstance ; she either rejoices at the things that happen to her or scoffs at them ; she says there is a curse on her, but she laughs at it. Heavens ! I shall miss my train ! The truth is she is like an apple with a rotten core. Tell me, what is the meaning of all this madness ? ”

“ The whole generation has been immolated, madame,” I replied. “ Men have become soldiers and women have gone mad and destiny has added her quota in a pretty series of catastrophes. Isabelle is a victim of that contradiction of snobbishness to which all sensitive souls cling sooner or later, which prevents them from becoming friendly with people until they are quite sure that they have no claim whatever to an interested friendship.”

She had the engine of the car stopped, as the noise prevented her from being heard properly.

“ . . . to think that up to her fifteenth year you couldn't find a better brought-up child,” she said, handing me her key which she had forgotten to give to the hall-porter. (Indeed, I forgot it myself

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until the heavy triangular piece of copper fixed to it made a hole in my pocket through which it clattered down to the pavement.)

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PROFESSOR OVIDE,
Handwriting Expert.

Case No. 34. ISABELLE.

The writing of a young woman of delicate and fairly sensitive characteristics. Optimistic by disposition. Although comfortably off, it is doubtful whether she belongs to aristocratic surroundings by birth. Intellect superficial, but quite sufficient to be pleasing. Ideas her own but seldom logical. Quick tempered.

" More of a flirt than she would ever admit, she still preserves a certain dignity and has an antipathy for anything too dissolute. More independence is shown than pride ; in fact this characteristic carried to a fault.

Expansive and amusing in company. Sincerity cannot be relied on. A luke-warm heart

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with spasms of tenderness. Insists on having authority and influence over those she loves. Sensuality, of which some is shown, is not of a particularly fastidious kind.

I re-read this character study of Isabelle's handwriting which I had made during the early days of our friendship by Professor Ovide of Saint-Maurles-Fossés. It had been useful to me in getting to know her better, as it showed me how false the diagnosis was. All that was left when one got to know her was a few amusing touches in the fortune-teller's jargon, at which she was the first to be amused.

Isabelle was impulsive temperamentally but retiring in mind. I never had time to find this out or, indeed, to make her acquaintance at all until after we had together tasted those joys which in other generations were made use of either to crown affection or to put an end to it. Actually, on the very evening of our first meeting, at the Théâtre

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Valle, she told me that I reminded her of a sycamore, and we fell into one another's arms in the carriage driving her back to her mother's house. The rules of the game were found to be much simplified in this way. Passion may have lost its cumulative excitement, but the law of sentimental, magnetic and physical interchange had freer rein and therefore gained in truth.

Shortly after this Isabelle admitted to me that she never missed an opportunity for this spontaneous gift of her person ; perhaps she behaved like this from an excess of modesty, never hesitating to sacrifice her virtue to it ; she considered that it improved her intelligence and her sense of delicacy, though, as a matter of fact, her intelligence was only of a very moderate order, and I doubt very much whether any sense of delicacy could ever have penetrated that " luke-warm heart with spasms of tenderness " which Professor Ovide had described to me.

Nevertheless, we found ourselves launched, as a matter of course, into a confiding intimacy such as is rarely the privilege of unprejudiced people to

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enjoy. By a curious retrogradation, due, no doubt, to the manner in which we had come to know one another—a proof that it is always dangerous to change the natural sequence of events—I immediately began to experience with Isabelle all the various phases of a love affair, but in reverse order. It began with indifference and boredom, went on to tenderness, through pleasure to love, ending up in curiosity and mild flirtation.

We saw each other very often. Isabelle spent month after month in Rome without my ever being able to discover what kept her in that dull and unpicturesque city with its ruined brick walls reminiscent of Bethune and Arras. When I asked her, jokingly, if she hoped to end her days there, she replied :

“ Perhaps, yes. At any rate, I shall stay until I discover what habit is, that monster which breathes forth chains and has a pendulum for a tail.”

Her apartments looked out over some old fortifications in the neighbourhood of the Porta Pia.

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My life was spent looking on to a courtyard from the second floor of the Farnese Palace, for I was a student at the Collegio Romano. I had a pile of notes there, a ladder with which to gather the books on the upper shelves of the library and a clogged inkpot. Precisely at six I used to take leave of my dear master in his corner room. He would be seated in a red velvet arm-chair reading inferior books by African authors, surrounded by Angora cats and curious pumice-stone coloured cats like those that sleep at the base of Trajan's column. I still remember his glasses lying like two sheets of ice on his forehead and his white hair as untamed as the brain beneath it, and I shall never forget his head like that of some old peasant Erasmus, standing out darkly against the Janiculum bathed in light. I then used to gain the courtyard through the draughty corridors, past the porter on duty who would favour me with a smile which seemed almost to be part of the silver lace on his uniform.

On the banks of the Tiber, Isabelle would be waiting for me, and we would return to the upper part of the town on foot. Her physique was sur-

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prising in this country of long-bodied, short-thighed women. She had a tiny head which she always used to say was full of water in order to account for her follies. Had she ever been capable of possessing a body? She seemed to be divided straight from the shoulders into two thin, tapering legs like a pair of compasses, and to move forward by digging them into the ground. On her right ankle she wore a heavy iridescent slave bangle of chased copper which gave her a slight limp.

By nature, and in the presence of a third person she was silent, but when alone with anyone she let herself go and said just what came into her head. She disliked casual acquaintances, particularly those one makes in hotels and boarding houses—though in this she made a mistake.

When I warned her against this asceticism she replied :—

“ The real ascetics are those who like the society of others. Mother is a good example. Vices and virtues? To them worldliness takes the place of everything else.” Isabelle hated her mother and never missed an opportunity of heaping ridicule

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on her, though she praised her to the skies in her absence. At meals she seemed to be continuously on the look out for an opportunity of springing on her.

Isabelle smiled by screwing up her narrow slits of eyes, and she used to chew a little cigarette made of ivory to prevent herself from biting her nails. As though to present her interlocutor with a fully fledged idea and to invite him to reply, she always finished her sentences by stretching out her open hands, the palms of which were painted bright pink. Speaking generally, she was without any wit except, like all women, when writing letters. Extracts which she let me see from her diary seemed to be devoid of merit. But she used to cough up blood, win money from me by cheating at poker, and she had a very distinct taste for telling lies which contrasted strangely with her physical courage. I had seen her, in an accident, so engrossed in tending others that she forgot to have her own injuries attended to. During three years of the war she drove an ambulance in the Noyon area.

In her own room Isabelle would order a drink

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and stop half-way through it ; before going on with it her eyes would fill with tears as though the drink had unlocked some mysterious and sensitive gateway. She would sit cross-legged on the carpet, gathering her feet beneath her with a certain dry gouty cracking of her bony knees, and smoke with the air of a lazy cat. And thus she would stay for hours, motionless, cynical and brooding.

In the spring Isabelle made new friends. She had lived quite alone all the winter.

“What do you think of Igor?” she asked.

I found fault with his beauty, his venomous-looking eyes, the riot of brightly coloured posters in which Igor, the great cinema star, appeared in dress clothes, on a deserted beach, as a struggling student, or in luxurious surroundings of cushioned ease ; I hated the sight of his irritating features in some tenement scene, the dull texture of his skin picked out with high lights, his pale whitened hands amongst those of rough men in the midst of card games in low haunts of vice.

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"He is just like a maple," said Isabelle.

Igor is a Græco-Irishman. His father is a Greek general and his mother is a general in the I.R.A. The first time I met him at Isabelle's house she looked at us both critically :

"Life is a mass of contrast !" she sighed.

It was at this period that Isabelle started taking drugs, surrounded herself with crystal prisms, breakfasted on preserved ginger, acquired a Florentine folding bed, received a magnolia every day from an unknown hand and continuously sent her servants out on strange errands. She declared that the feel of buckskin made her faint. She invented special arguments for cutting herself off from life. She received me reclining on a panther-skin rug and her speech became elliptic. I reproached her for never going out anywhere.

"Oh ! but I go out every night !"

"Yes, but into what sort of world ?"

"Into the world of dreams."

One day she took me to her bedroom. Over her bed were pinned unpaid bills, letters, photographs of athletes and a slip of paper on which I

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read : " Mustn't forget to go with Igor on Saturday." I thought it more discreet to say nothing, but she looked at me and said :—

" Your eyes waver. Igor's eyes are as clear as crystal. I don't like resigned heroes."

" And I only like women who make their own hats and suffer from disillusion."

" Just as you like. But look out for hysterics."

She put her glass on a gramophone record and watched it go round to the tune of

*' Naples, let me die
Beneath your magic sky.'*

" You . . ."

" Please don't," she interrupted, " I feel sure you are going to say : ' Stick to me, you'll find me a mascot.' "

Igor had a girl friend called Wanda, to whom Isabelle introduced me : she was a Pole and believed in ghosts ; we used to make nocturnal excursions to the sandy shores of Ostium. I would sit on the back seat ; Isabelle sat with Wanda on her right and Igor on her left and held the hands of

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both of them impartially. Her obvious sincerity was disconcerting and in order to prevent myself from railing against her I started chaffing her :

“ I would rather be first ‘in my village than second in Rome or third . . .”

Under cover of my easy insolence I laid bare all my forgotten or remembered griefs. I felt I should have liked to have lived with Isabelle, and at the same time to have had for her the perfect love which only comes with absence. But in the evening I found myself liking in her what in the morning I was compelled to detest, her indiscretions, her opaque mind and transparent clothes, the impetuosity and sordidness of her pleasures.

Through Wanda, Isabelle got to know the perfume of red hair, the reason sadness overcame her in the afternoons, the best place to get silk jumpers, and new Eastern patiences for telling fortunes and how to kill bees to suck their honey. It was the régime of limes, of grape fruit, of jujubes, and of tricolor sweets. Isabelle had lozenges and spirals painted on her luggage, thought mottoes out for herself, sent anonymous letters to politicians, bought

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mosaic brooches, wore church vestments, alarmed the neighbourhood by her nocturnal clamourings, preached poverty and decided that she had heart disease.

During this period I was not quite so unhappy. Isabelle made appointments to meet me in the public gardens. Seated on the benches she would tell me that she was going to commit suicide by gas, but that she did not want to be dragged into a chemist's shop.

Her thoughts seemed to hesitate, like a bat in bright daylight.

Pale and rather ridiculous she went on :

"I am at the cross-roads . . ."

To cheer her up I quoted to her this verse of Max, the good-natured fable-monger of the rue Ravignan :

Hercules found two paths upon his way :

By one path vice, by t'other virtue lay.

Whichever one he chose, of this be sure

That, further on, the road would branch once more.

One morning I met Wanda. It was in the Piazza San Isidoro. In the course of building a branch

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of the Banco Commerciale some workmen had excavated a temple of Jupiter. All the illustrated papers had views of it. It was a good excuse for a walk. It was pouring with rain and Wanda was tightly wrapped in impenetrable oilskins, a vision of mauve and pink.

I found myself reproaching her for her domineering ways, her clever fencing with words, her wayward morals, in a word for the trap into which Isabelle had fallen.

"Did you ever hear," she asked, "how I first met Isabelle? My hair may be red, but she's more jealous than I am. One day she waited all night outside Igor's door, and when it opened it was I who came out. She didn't know who I was but she came up and spoke to me :

" ' I've got something important to say to you,' she said.

" I took her back to my place. She stayed there . . . We were there more than a week without daring to confess it to Igor."

Surrounded by reed hurdles there appeared the foundations of the Bank, amongst which was a

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two-headed Jupiter which had just been unearthed, cold and dominating, and stood there like the first Manager of that Branch.

“Don’t you like my story?”

“It makes me sad to see how much that is irregular and unproductive there is in all you modern women. You are really nothing but sex officials.”

“As if that worries *you*—but take it from me, all Isabelle’s waywardness is really only a series of mortifying observances destined to humble her pride.”

“You are, nothing but a rather nice piece of sophistry,” I replied, and began to leave her.

She called me back.

“Do *you* think I look like an ever-green oak?” she asked.

The next thing that Isabelle found was a mulatto. His name was Jack and he kept his trousers up with a nickel-plated belt. With the heels and toes of his patent leather shoes on a polished floor he could trace magic characters which one felt one

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wanted to decipher. His nails looked like drops of pink liquid hovering at his finger-tips. Bending either backwards or forwards he could touch the floor with his woolly head without an effort. He was a fetish-worshipper and had a passion for ladies' vanity bags. We saw them together on the Palatine and at the Excelsior Bar.

Isabelle began to sing his praises, but I forestalled her :

" Now, don't tell me he looks like a wild briar," I said.

All day she would write his name on little bits of paper which she would roll into pellets and swallow.

Shortly after this she began to develop a taste for methylated spirits, plug tobacco, clog dancing, the most ear-splitting brass bands, silver gilt tableware, red satin drawers and patchwork cloaks.

" Jack loves me," said Isabelle. " He asks me to write to him and for photographs of myself. His skin is mottled like porcelain. He has prehensile feet, and climbs down trees like a cat, head first. Besides, he can forge signatures and pick

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locks. When he comes to see me he says: 'I can't leave without taking something of yours away.' "

"I love him too," she added. "He is such an adept at that secret language which pours out during pleasure, those shameful words which serve equally well for obscenity and are therefore so precious. We were forced into each other's arms the moment we met, just as though we were magnetized. When he puts his big black hands on my forehead my headaches go, as true as I stand here. And yet mother says I am intractable! Change of love acts on me in the same way that change of air does on other people."

When did they meet? We never saw him, but we received anonymous letters containing distorted photographs of our friend. On closer examination we saw that her head had been cut out of one photograph and gummed on to another. I came across a bracelet I had given her, in a second-hand shop in the Travestera.

One day Wanda said to me:

"Yesterday morning I was in my bedroom

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dressing. The bell rang and being alone I didn't open the door.

" 'Who is there?' I said.

" Someone muttered behind the door: 'Let me come in. It's a friend.' Of course I did nothing. I heard steps going downstairs again and that was all."

In the midst of all this Isabelle disappeared, as I have said, at the very moment her mother was leaving Rome. I waited, confident that it could not be long before she made some sign to me. But she made none. Sometimes her absence was a relief to me, but it was more often a source of sorrow: we no longer yearn for mystery when our own friends develop a taste for the enigmatic. After a day without her my room seemed to give me a chilly reception in the evening. I became nervous and impatient, bewailing the awkwardness of life, dashing into every street crowd and finding stimulation in newspaper pars. I was a scholar, and I could not accustom myself to live as one has to nowadays, without antecedents, without enquiring into anything, continually meeting madness half-way.

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One evening I found Igor and Wanda on the terrace of a café. They were consuming a curious saffron coloured drink in front of the stone flounces of the Gesù.

Isabelle had given no sign of life to any of us.

"All I know is from my masseuse," said Wanda. "She tells me that Isabelle has rented a house outside the walls. Annexe No. 12, in the grounds of a Boche villa with a name like an inn. It is beyond the Porta del Popolo in a gap between two hills, in a damp garden overwhelmed by shadows . . ."

Igor interrupted her.

"Does the proprietor come straight out of a German story and wear a black night-cap and a bearded of bats? Does he live in a cottage surrounded by mastiffs who growl and sniff under the doors? That's the very man. I know the place, we did a film there once."

"Supposing we go up and have a surprise supper with her," I said.

We put some bottles of champagne in the car-

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riage, a basket of fruit and a large lump of ice to cool them with.

We had to stop the horse half-way up the hill.

We took charge of the provisions. The gate was open. Igor and Wanda were laughing in the shadows, making farm-yard noises and imitating kisses on the backs of their hands. The silence of the night was broken by dogs barking somewhere. We picked our way through the semicircle of fig-trees and then the path turned and came to an abrupt stop before a wall of rustling bamboos. The illusion that we were in a jungle was enhanced by the roaring of a lion which broke out suddenly from the menagerie of the Villa Borghese close by.

A white bungalow marked No. 12.

Wanda knocked, softly at first and then more loudly. We shouted. A field mouse scuttled away. We remained huddled together, silent, confused by the darkness, our arms full of bottles. The ice burnt my fingers.

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Igor suggested that we should get in at the back, through the garden. We climbed the wall, helping ourselves by a fir tree from which the cones fell rattling to the ground. No sound or light came from the house. I struck a match, lighting up a flight of steps at the top of which a door stood open. I turned on the electric switch. A hanging lamp in the centre of the room scorched our eyes, flooding the room with its white light. We were assailed by the smell of musk. Igor placed the champagne on the floor and went on : in the bedroom Isabelle lay on the floor, naked, motionless, and with black discolorations round her neck.

THE SIX-DAY NIGHT

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SHE had been there for three nights running. She was always alone except for the dances, which she never missed, but which she only danced with the professional dancers or with girl friends. If anyone else asked her for a dance she refused ; she refused me also, although I only went there to see her and she knew it. It was not so much her milk-white back, her jet bead dress which was a shimmering black waterfall, her excess of onyx jewellery, or her long narrow eyes meeting her side-locks and looking like onyxes themselves ; it was rather her flat nose, the rise and fall of her bosom, her beautiful Jewish complexion like a sulphur-dusted vine, the odd fact of her being alone. And in addition to this her curious manœuvrings several

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times each evening towards the lavatory and the telephone.

She spent her money on drinks, not in tipping the head waiter. She went on from short drinks to long ones. Between the hours of midnight and three o'clock on this third evening these consisted of two glasses of champagne, six anisettes and a small decanter of brandy, to say nothing of tooth-picks and green almonds.

She went upstairs to the telephone with me behind her.

"Léa speaking. Is your milk good? Everything going on all right? . . . No stitch or anything? Has he eaten yet? Ah . . .? From the bottle?"

We seemed to know one another better in the setting of this waterless lavatory polluted by dead flowers, cigarette ends, broken dolls, cocaine, assignations and *poudre rachel*. She examined herself pitilessly in the mirror beneath the lamp, so closely that she kissed her own lips. On the mist of the breath she left there I inscribed my heart. She shrugged a shoulder.

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She was wearing a bodice on which numerous Chinese officials in silver thread were discussing affairs of state on the threshold of numerous pagodas.

“Any of these to let?” I enquired, placing my finger on the door of the pagoda at each place where the pattern repeated it on her chest. She drew herself up with dignity.

“Are you often taken that way?”

The lavatory attendant, who was wiping her hands on an overcoat, turned round and pleaded for me.

“Yes, you look like a gentleman,” said Léa, “but when I’m tight I’m always wrong.”

From the balcony, above the up-pointing bows of the fiddlers, one saw a picture of niggers in sea-side clothes chewing at nothing and quaking, with a kind of religious ague. Twisted copper irises, like offshoots of the “métro,” lit up views of the Seine, no longer spoilt by factories, but steeped in romance and in which naked ladies were bathing timidly. Clapsed body to body in the waltzing-trough the dancers surged along. The hall emitted

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an aroma of oxo, addled egg, arm-pit and of *un jour viendra*.

"Where do you live?" I asked her. "I love you."

"Go on! You're kidding. Or d'you mean it?"

"Both together, as usual."

She went on, inevitably.

"I seem to have seen you before somewhere."

"You are my very sister," I said, kissing her dress, "and I cannot live without you."

I must have seemed to her brazen, contemptible and utterly devoid of character. She disengaged herself.

"You seem in a desperate hurry."

"I'm not really, but I always do everything quickly and badly because I'm so afraid of ceasing to want to do it too soon."

"Well, it's nearly two o'clock. I've got to clear off now."

"Not before you've told me why you disappear every other moment. Are you selling *it*?"

She opened her eyes wide, like saucers.

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"Not likely," she replied, "do you think I want five years?"

"Well then, what?"

"It's to get the latest news of my boy who's working."

"What does your boy do?"

"He's a long-distance cyclist, a six-day man . . . He's in a six-day race, see? Do you mean to tell me you've never heard of Petitmathieu? Where on earth do you come from?"

With a sweep of her arm she enveloped herself in the skins of 98 white rabbits.

"I told my coachman not to wait. Get me a taxi. Tell him to go towards Grenelle."

Along the banks of the winding Seine the taxi clock kept beating like a fevered pulse. Lamps like the husks of pink pearls along the Cours-la-Reine, phosphorescent sewer outfalls, the girl's dry cough, bursts of affection, resolutions on my part not to have any more nonsense after leaving the Champ-de-Mars, carts full of blue cabbages.

"I love cabs," I said. "We ought to take one of these cabs and live in it for months until we get

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to know its lamps, its springs, its tyres by heart. You know, for instance, that the blinds of the Urbaine cabs only pull down half-way and that it is nice to be behind a slow horse when Paris seethes beneath its cloak of mist and one does that which depopulates the world . . .”

Grenelle. The river sweeps beneath the yoke of the bridge. Red lights on the lovers' parapet, green ones on the business men's. Fourteen francs twenty-five centimes on the clock.

I enquire anxiously :

“ Don't you live in Paris ? ”

“ Idiot,” she replies, “ who said anything about where I live ? I am going to the Winter Cycle-track for the two o'clock stakes.”

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A1. underground passage led to the enclosure. The cheap carpet over the door was rippled by draughts. When we were half-way through there was a terrific thundering overhead. The boards groaned. Then we came out into a wooden circus connected to its glass roof by a fog broken up into luminous conical sections. Under enamelled shades

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powerful electric lamps followed the track ; Léa stood imperially on tiptoe.

“ Look : yellow and black . . . The Wasps . . . the team of ‘ aces.’ That’s Van den Hoven racing now. They’ll wake Petitmathieu up for the two o’clock stakes.”

Shrill whistles cut through the air. Then four thousand yells broke out, yells that seemed to burst straight from the throat, such as one only gets from a Parisian crowd.

The Australian tried to forge ahead. They were beginning to sprint. Above the advertisement placards I saw the drawn features and eager eyes of the populace. A band broke out. Latriche was singing. “ *Hardi coco !* ” was taken up in chorus. This livened matters up. The sixteen competitors passed by every twenty seconds in a compact body, keeping a watchful eye on each other.

The weighing-room occupied one end of the velodrome. At each end the track turned and there it gradually banked until it was as steep as a wall which the racers in their impetus climbed

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almost up to the words "THE MOST RELIABLE PETROL." The notice board began to show signs of life. Figures came down and others took their place.

"4th night, 85th hour. 2,300 kilometres 650 metres."

"Look, there he is!" said Léa, "there's my darling getting on to his machine."

So far Petitmathieu was still swinging along easily by himself, with his curled hair, his dirty neck and his eyes as treacherous as those of a cat.

"Isn't he a lamb, considering it's his fourth night, the dear boy!"

The nickelled megaphone announced two stakes of a hundred francs each, for the best time done over a given number of laps. The signal for the start of these was given with pistol shots.

"Let's go closer, things are becoming more exciting. Ah! he has seen us."

He had seen me. I was holding Léa's hand. We exchanged a look of hatred as man to man.

The noise seemed to echo in spirals through the length of the building and then gradually to

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die down. At the signal the sixteen men seemed to shoot round the corners and were hurled into the straight again by the steep twisted turns.

"Léa," I murmured, "I wish that, in the words of that old puritan Agrippa d'Aubigné, we were 'cradled in delights.' What do you like for breakfast?"

The mob was making an inhuman din.

"You're 'barmy,'" she replied. "Go on the spree when that darling is going round and round on that track there? Not much. A pretty sort of thing I'd be if I thought of anything but him during these six days and six nights."

At the finish they pounced on the stakes like carp on a crust of bread, the woolly Italian, the Swiss giant, the Corsican N.C.O.'s, and all the niggers amongst the fair Flemings.

"It's all over. The Australian's won. Just like our luck! Petitmathieu let himself be hemmed in," said Léa. "He's going to get off; let's go and see him, the love!"

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The competitors' quarters had sprung up at the small end of the track. Each man had reserved for him a wooden cubicle with a curtain in front, in which there was a bed. In a slot above one of these was written: *VELOX STAND. PETIT-MATHIEU—VAN DEN HOVEN TEAM*. A searchlight played on the innermost recesses of the cubicles so that the crowd should not miss a single action of its favourites, even during their rest. The attendants dressed in white hospital overalls bustled about with a clinking of plates amongst the petrol and grease stains, mixing embrocations with eggs and camphor on garden chairs. Dismantled machines, bicycle frames, rubber washers, pieces of black cottonwool soaking in basins. Petit-mathieu was lying stretched on his back, his hands behind his head, resigning his hairy and heavily veined legs to the masseur who was patting them to make them supple.

"Do let me kiss him, Bibendum," said Léa to the manager.

Petitmathieu opened an eye.

"That's all right," he said crossly, pushing her away. "Let him get on with his job."

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"You haven't shaved, you ugly old thing."

"Oh! shut up!"

Silence fell. The racers passed by us, along the rails, their shadows being thrown on the awning above the cubicles. Their naked legs went round like mechanical toys. Van den Hoven called out as he passed:

"Buck up! to-morrow night's nearly here."

I made Petitmathieu's acquaintance, but he seemed to ignore my presence entirely. He was grumbling to himself. That would teach him to get up again for a bloody stake. And only a hundred franc one at that. Stingy brutes. A lot of touts who came there with their tarts, that is, if they didn't come to pinch other people's girls!

His thighs were now like wet ivory.

"Petitmathieu! Stand up there!" the mob cried relentlessly from above the Peugeot lions. But he made a sign with his hand that he was fed up with them.

The soiled mechanics in khaki shirts with their five days' beard were binding handlebars with

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pitched string, making bundles of wheels to be examined, tightening nuts.

Petitmathieu was feeling uncomfortable.

" My stomach, when are you going to do my stomach ? "

The masseur pulled down the elastic belt of Petitmathieu's shorts. Below his navel was written "*4th Zouave Regiment. 1st Company,*" with the motto "*All I can get.*" He rubbed him with the palm of his hand.

" Put some talc-powder on my thighs."

Those who had just been relieved by their teammates got off their machines for two hours' sleep. Their managers stopped them by grasping their saddles and handlebars, undid the straps fastening their feet to the pedals and carried their charges with tender care towards their beds.

Then everything settled down for the night. In spite of the noise some of the competitors were snoring. Others got up and ragged about from bed to bed like in a barrack-room. One heard the noise of bicycle pumps being used, followed by that of compressed air whistling through valves.

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Petitmathieu remained on his back like a corpse, his hands with their square black nails and thick aluminium rings crossed on his chest. Léa sat herself at his feet and rouged her cheeks. I moved away.

From behind the partition I heard Petitmathieu talking :

“All the same, I told you I wouldn't have you go to Maxim's during the race.”

Léa explained that she was too nervy to stay at home by herself. She couldn't sleep. She only thought of him and of his lovely thighs working away so hard, of his beloved face with his black curly hair, his Charlie Chaplin moustache, his square jaw, his eyes fixed on the back-wheel of the pacer, his scarlet sweater fastened at the neck by mother-of-pearl buttons. It was not the first time he had been tested. Hadn't she simply *lived* at the end of a telegraph wire all the time he was grinding round Madison Square the year before ?

Crushed beneath the weight of their 87 hours of work and 2,352 kilometres 580 metres of distance the competitors were going round in Indian file

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to the silvery trill of bearing-balls, a negro leading the way. Some of them had put on goggles. Now and then someone had a puncture or a chain broke. Hurriedly his sleeping comrade was awakened and seated forcibly on the saddle; still asleep he attached himself to the others. The round became monotonous as always at the end of those nights which no one ever dreams of leaving except in the state of collapse. A silence weighing tons descended on the assembly.

Léa rejoined me in the enclosure.

"Hop it, or he won't be able to sleep. He's watching us all the time. It drives him mad to know I'm with someone and that he can't leave his bunk. He'll get tireder and tireder and nervier and nervier.

"It isn't that he's got it in for you, he even thinks you're rather a sport, if a little half-baked," she went on; "but he's got it in for me. He won't have me go to Maxim's or dance. He's frightfully touchy."

So I learnt that Petitmathieu only allowed her to go to the Excelsior, the racers' café, to write

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letters and see people. There at any rate he knew what was going on, from his pals and from the waiters.

In vain I promised her a surprise, presents, complete discretion; I could not persuade Léa to come back with me. I only got her permission to meet her next day at the apéritif hour. I needed her. She described such sweet plump curves and her harsh voice, a delight in itself, enchanted me. All that soft skin smoothed by beauty creams, washed with ointments, all those jewels, all her hidden charms, her dyes, drugs and tenderness, were all at the disposition of those strong, hairy, piston-like legs now resting, rolled so carefully in their blankets. The whole thing was an illogical and yet natural game into which I was intruding, as a third party, and which amazed and irritated me but, at the same time, was the only thing that gave me the strength to bear that cruel moment in which the night-prowler has to confess himself beaten.

Sunset. Grenadine. The hour flowed smoothly.

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A feeling of peace crept over everything, in spite of the fieriness of my drink. I was waiting for Léa at the Brasserie de la Porte-Maillot. She came down from Montmartre in a hired brougham, dressed in an otter-skin coat, and drank long drinks.

"This reminds me of when I first knew Petit-mathieu. I rented a room by the month in the rue des Acacias."

My first words were to ask her for news of the race.

"A little tired," she said. "Backache. And colic. But the other leading team has it too. The Australian is done in. Water on the knee coming on. He's chucked it. They've hardly moved all the morning; they're just crawling along."

"And Van den Hoven?"

"Pedals like a demon all the time. But he has no head, no sense of combination. It's Bibendum and Petitmathieu who come out strong when something's got to be done."

I began to realize that my pleasure at seeing Léa again was not an unmixed one. I loved her plebeian hands, her eyelids the colour of a fifty-

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franc note . . . that cold heart which warmed as if by magic to physical strength, but I could not forget the struggle going on round and round down there.

Drawn up by the kerb the cars of the patrons exhausted the catalogue of strange shapes. There were guns, yachts, bath-tubs, airships, whilst some of them were merely hastily covered with a champagne case. Their owners were those highly-polished and beautiful young men who stand for hours behind plate-glass windows in the avenue des Champs-Élysées in tiled show-rooms containing nothing but a palm, a Persian prayer-rug and a nickelled chassis. They always remind me of the ladies sitting in their windows in the low quarters of Amsterdam.

The waiters hurried about between the tables, holding a black-coloured apéritif between each finger. Mechanics in overalls, cyclists with tyres wrapped round their bodies, pugilists leaving Cuny's. Each man greeted his friends with a gesture characteristic of his occupation. Bantam weights gave each other hearty right hooks in the

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ribs, footballers slapped each other on the legs.

Léa was still pretty and elusive. The only thing which roused her at all was a yellow and black scarf, the colours of the team, which I had bought specially for her. She wore a large white felt hat trimmed with a single vulture's feather and drop ear-rings which reminded me of the Far West and of the ladies who shoot over their shoulders, aiming in a mirror. I told her 'this. I also told her that I was not a man like Petit-mathieu with "*All I can get*" for his motto, and that I had never wanted anything for six days and six nights in my life, that the doctor forbade me cold baths, that in matters of daily life I had always done "the correct thing" to a dreadful extent, that my heart was an object entirely distinct from myself, and that very thin women with curly hair were not without their charm.

On the other hand, she was enthralled when she discovered that I knew the Italian lakes and the author of "Tipperary," and that I had some autographs of Marshal Joffre. I even boasted of having in my studio an exact replica of an arab chief's

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tent and of being able to play her Tartini's " Devil's Sonata " on the violin.

She looked at me :

" I say, you're not a bit like other people, are you ? "

" Thank you, Léa. It is only women who say things like that to one ; and yet it is above all with them that one *is* like everyone else."

The school of motoring near by emitted a fœtid stench. In the distance a hunt could be heard in progress just beyond the fortifications, mixed with the melancholy hooting of the siren in the shadows of the scenic railway at Luna Park which is like the hull of a huge steamer abandoned on the stocks of a bankrupt ship builder.

I had to admit to myself with some annoyance on arriving at the race-track that evening, that I was going there just as much for the race as for Léa ; nothing had changed on the announcements. But suddenly there was an uproar. The six racers were going round in a coloured ribbon in which were mixed green, yellow, white, scarlet and orange.

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By their nimble pedalling they devoured the track worn smooth by their tyres, to the clang of the bell marking their progress.

Petitmathieu was in the saddle ; he saw me and gave me a smile of recognition with his left eyelid. Then, towards the 2,921st kilometre in the 109th hour an effort was made to get a lead. The balconies groaned beneath the weight of the public surprised during their supper, their mouths full of food.

The negro, his nose glued to his handlebars, went off like an arrow, and getting half a lap ahead, kept his lead. There was instant confusion. Those who were suffering from the effects of a fall or from aching backs and those whose wheels were buckled were left behind one by one and were soon caught up again. Led by Petitmathieu, the competitors threw themselves in the wake of the negro who began to weaken and look round : his team-mate was asleep and did not come ; the crowd yelled to him to come to the rescue.

“Hi, cocky ! Boot-face ! Get mounted !”

A waiter let a glass of beer fall from the first

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tier. The Hall shook beneath the howls, the rattles and the whistles until suddenly the negro straightened his back, brought his hands to the centre of his handlebars and "resting on his oars," showed that he had had enough.

I made for the competitors' quarters. Petitmathieu began to dine heartily. Washed, shaved, a fine-looking lad in his cashmere dressing-gown, he was gnawing away at a cutlet he held in his hand. Seated on the edge of the bed, Léa watched him chew, her eyes moist and submissive. He offered me a bowl of champagne and some whisked eggs in a tin that had once held rubber solution.

I was proud of my acquaintance with this athlete whom the programme called "A Caruso of the pedal." I found myself admiring his supple legs, his faultless knees. I assured him of my warm support and spurred him on.

"I led the pack," he explained, simply. "When that happened it didn't take long to break the nigger's heart. All we wanted was to work together."

Petitmathieu amazed me most by his calm, dining peacefully like an ordinary citizen a few

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minutes after that hue and cry, surrounded now by his assiduous attendants, his adoring mate beside him, propped up by cushions, with a screen decorated with wistaria behind him which gave him the appearance of being in his home.

Léa held one of his fingers tenderly and said nothing. I loved them both equally. I told them so.

We clinked glasses. Léa proposed the following toast :

To our health which is dear to us all
And which is so necessary to us,
Because with health one can earn money,
With money one can buy sugar,
With sugar one can catch flies.

Petitmathieu explained his happiness to me :
“ She’s a regular scream. But a good girl for all that. And always ready with tempting dishes, bandages and anything else that’s wanted. She’s got a coachman by the month who plays the trumpet and knows all about mushrooms. Clever isn’t the word for her, and what a talker ! Makes a party go like anything. Between ourselves, a skin with veins in it like rivers on a map, a mane of

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hair down to her heels, none of those three blobs of hair which women wear nowadays and which don't keep a comb busy. And what breasts ! cool as an icehouse ; and then, going about things painstakingly whilst only putting half her back into it ; washes her teeth after every meal, eats asparagus with special tongs and never wears stays.

“ Wait till you know her better,” he said, “ and you'll see what I mean.”

The orchestra was playing a boston which sounded like switchbacks. From exquisite heights one was cast into the languorous valleys of the refrains. Some comedians with powdered chins came in after the theatre. They wanted to dance, but the mob treated them as good-for-nothings, braggarts, sausage-eaters.

I left Petitmathieu in high spirits, holding his audience, pretending to be in bed with Léa in his cubicle.

I had to give my promise that I would return the next day for the supreme effort and that I would stay there all night.

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Sixth night, 138th hour, 3,864 kil. 570. The same monotonous spectacle. They slept as they went round, like weary squirrels ; one of them touched the wheel in front and fell, dragging the others with him. One heard shouts in English, Turkish oaths, a desultory clamour caused by someone giving up the race ; then the round began again.

It was very late. The night sprints were over. The competitors circled round, their hands reversed to rest their wrists and wrapped in thick woollen shawls against the night cold.

Petitmathieu was resting in his cubicle. Van den Hoven was carrying out the humble toil of the night, leaving to his team mate the brilliant work of the last hour which was about to begin. I offered to lend a hand to Bibendum whose face was as drawn by weariness as though distorted in a spoon. In our shirt-sleeves we put an inner tube into a bucket of water to find the leak in it. Léa found me doing this and reproached me for neglecting her. I shrugged my shoulders.

Many of the spectators were spending the night

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there. Children were sleeping lying on pink or yellow sporting papers. Orderlies from the École Militaire, private chauffeurs, workmen from les Moulineaux on their way to their factories, clerks on their way to their offices, provincial couples in mourning, yawned, kept themselves awake by playing cards and opened bottles with a pop.

“Ugène,” said someone, “pass me the scent-spray.”

Wrapping ourselves in blankets, our heads on sacking, we waited side by side for the dawn. Léa took my hand in hers.

“What small bones you’ve got! I feel I’m going to get into trouble over you,” she said, like the heroine of a penny novelette. Her voice was soft and silky. “You’re just the opposite to a record-breaker. You’re more like a priest or a comic singer. You don’t say much but you’re full of life. And besides, I’ve always longed to be interested in someone whose health wasn’t very good. A young artist, for instance, with his shirt

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open at the neck, veins much too blue and a fine pointed beard. . . . Take me."

"Nothing," I replied, "could have afforded me greater pleasure, even as late as yesterday. And perhaps to-morrow again. But to-day my whole heart is here; I am a prey to one thought only, and that is that Petitmathieu should win. I no longer belong to myself; nor do you; we have become part of the velodrome, an incident in the race, waiting for victory. A few hours more and just think of the click of the cameras, the crowd, the special editions of the papers, the banquet with its flags and deputies. We will ourselves have contributed in our own small way to our winner getting all this."

"Dearest," said Léa, annoyed, "you're a good boy. That's nice. It's sweet of you. I love you more for that."

Disappointment turned down the corners of her mouth.

She waited. She closed her eyes. Then half dreaming she said :—

"I don't know how Petitmathieu will take this."

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On our right, above the advertisement of Éternol
varnish, through the glass roof the desolate dawn
appeared, heralded by a pianola. I sang :

'Tis the hour of tumbled badclothes and the dawning of
• the day,

And the rooster to the rooster hoarsely cries.

'Tis the hour of sweet denials when flowers are cast away,
Yet how strangely, while you sleep, my passion dies.

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“**I** LIKE the tall girl much the better, the one with the big hips,” said Jean, with alcoholic obstinacy.

The other one was a mass of lean muscles, criss-cross veins, tight-fitting bracelets and prominent bones, and had a face like a sacred cow.

In preferring her I felt the ready superiority that one feels in dreams, and, as in a dream, I was childishly pleased to be able to say:—.

“I like her, she is a cross between a unicorn and a red donkey.”

A dahlia sailed into my open mouth and nearly throttled me. The Battle of Flowers. It was like a garden flying about in the air.

Stimulated by Schubert's “Militär Marsch,”

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the two Jewesses were dancing on the raised platform, nervous, pathetic, ignoring our tender glances, the patterns made by the smoke, the glint of the glasses which men with blue shaved heads were pouring into themselves with a sound like a bath emptying.

When the gipsy band ceased playing, the sisters Hajyz Nanas came forward and bowed; the one that Jean preferred held her wig in her hand, creating a roar of laughter by exhibiting a domed head like that of a Tafilgiers merchant.

"You've been had, it's a man."

"Yes, I've been had."

In spite of its imposing entrance, its two palm-trees, its 200 kronen admission and its commissionaire who played the heavy father at the *Anders Wien* theatre, and who was none other than the famous General Rubinat of Przemyśl, the *Jardin de Paris* was a low down place. But it was the only place of any interest at all open in Vienna in July, on the days when there was nothing on at the Belvedere.

As though exasperated by the light, the chande-

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lier was turning from side to side, like a crystal porcupine in the centre of the Venetian mirrors which reflected slabs of cherry coloured damask and rococo loggias in imitation of Schönbrunn. Women in long skirts were enthralling women in short skirts, as irreconcilable as a jazz band and a symphonic orchestra. There were certain fondlings of the legs and a way of saying "mon cher" in French; they wore mementos of Nice in the form of locketts which when opened revealed the donor, a grand-duke since hanged, who was here preserved in a cold storage of diamonds; they recalled the lunches of the Archduke Otho at Negresco's, or the parties given by the Queen of Naples, nodding their good-byes to one another with their unfashionable aigrettes and faded birds of paradise and putting a world of entreaty into the angle of their tall wide Maison Lewis hats; and there was a world of bitterness in the flaccid cheeks which had become in these days the sport of Greek profiteers.

The younger ones only kept pace with them by their dancing, their excess of nervous energy

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and their gift of accommodating themselves to . . . circumstances which earned for them the name of "modernists" amongst the old stagers. When my little dancing girl greeted me, I offered her some of the *ersatz* Tokay which was oscillating in a flask on our gilded table.

"Where do you come from?"

Her reply was to give her name:—

"Zaël."

She came from Pest. We only boasted a few words of German between us.

"And you?"

"From Paris."

"*Schlecht* Paris," she said, putting out her tongue.

Some Italian subalterns with carnations in their cartridge pouches were blocking the entrance; Roumanian majors who had come to look the livestock over picked on ladies with heads like sheep. The Reparations Commission was methodically drinking the local champagne. Under the famished gaze of the waiters profiteers were nervously stuffing foie gras into their cheeks.

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"My friend really thought your partner was your sister."

"We aren't even related. He comes from Gratz and is called Samuel Ehrenfeld. Shall I ask him over? Why are you laughing, nunky?"

"In French it would be funny to be called Samuel Field-of-Honour."

For 280 kronen we got some cigars made of dried grass and also some currants in saucers which Zaël dug at with a straw.

"What did you say?"

"I said that you've got a jolly little face," I answered, and I ran my finger round my own face as they do in pantomimes.

With difficulty and without any sense of balance, Zaël kept her sylph-like Jewish body on her chair. She was flat chested, with a delicate skin, a round back and nervous capable hands which were too mature for her seventeen years.

"You'll see any amount like her, as you go down the rue de Rome, when the lectures at the Conservatoire are on," said Jean, and proceeded to interrogate her.

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“What do you think of Bela Kuhn?”

“Bela Kuhn!” She broke into a pæan of praise on the subject in Yiddish. “He is in Vienna. But, nunky, he has been King of Hungary. He is fabulously rich. Soon he will also be King in Vienna. Ehrenfeld says that he is thought a great deal of in Moscow and that he will go on to Italy. And then they will hang all the Hungarians who throw Jews into wells.”

When, at half-past eleven, the street absorbed the audience of the Jardin de Paris, Zaël suggested the Moulin Rouge with its private entrance on the St. Petersplatz. It was a mausoleum of the Secession period, in black marble hung with conventional gilded ropes and a ceiling made of sunk panels of hammered silver covered with turquoises.

The proprietor, formerly a Captain in the Imperial Guard, with a face like a long-jump champion, gave us seats on the edge of a gloomy carpet decorated with a pattern consisting of bunches of flowers. We drank an indigo-coloured liqueur. Zaël made friends with some resident Greeks in light grey

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Eton jackets, soft collars, pumps and white socks. Dressed in a turned jacket, with side whiskers like silver filigree framing his worn out face, an unemployed cabinet minister offered hard boiled eggs for sale from a little gilt basket tied round his neck by a pink ribbon.

Jean wanted to blow his nose. Zaël threw herself with a little scream on his cashmere handkerchief. The silk drove her quite frantic.

“ Oh ! nunky. Please give it to me.”

“ All right. It will be my parting gift. We are leaving to-morrow for Budapest, by the Danube, because of the railway strike.”

She uttered a cry :—

“ Oh ! do take me. I want to see my grandfather again. He is the guardian of the synagogue there.”

“ But you haven't got a passport.”

“ I know a Russian who makes them, near the Southern station ; his name is Apotheosis.”

She had little ways which were quite irresistible except when she bit my arm to the bone out of sheer happiness. I uttered a protest :

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“The Almighty has said : ‘Thou shalt not eat that which is unclean.’”

She listened, her body quite motionless except for her eyes ; but her eyes, under their heavy lids, held promises of many things. Jean, in a maudlin way, admitted her witchery in his turn. We went into a private room where a lamp was smoking near some satanic looking curtains.

“Drei cocktails.” Blackbeetles of some oriental breed ran about on the gold lacquered tables.

Zaël let herself be kissed without allowing it to interrupt her reasonings.

“I don’t go to the synagogue any longer except on the Day of Atonement, you know, when one empties everything one has in one’s pockets into the water. I have forgotten all the Hebrew I was taught for my initiation.

“Do take me. My grandfather is so old and ill. I haven’t seen him for eighteen months and if I don’t go now I shall never see him. I am the light of his life. It is written : ‘Woe is she who cherisheth not her ancestors and whose feet do not abide in her house.’ The old man never

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goes out for fear of assassination. My mother bore me at a ball. I was immediately baptized in champagne. A year ago one of my brothers was cudgelled to death at Szegedin; the other, Samaris, is in New York. He writes pro-Jewish articles. We are all suspect to the officials. But I can go with you, my nunkies, because you are foreigners with white passports and they won't dare say anything to me."

The nunkies fumbled at the bosom of their little niece.

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We went down the river ruffled by the north wind, between grain elevators rising up like concrete trumpets, connected together by little wheeled trucks. A moment later, the greenish domes and façades of Slavonian Palaces with their windows broken, passed in, review by bronze equestrian statues; Vienna amongst her gasometers, in the midst of her crowds of unemployed, still made her bow like a dowager fallen on evil days. One passed lighters loaded with war material, filled to sinking point with an incredible collection of old

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iron, chevaux de frise, wheels, rust ; the whole country was still giving itself up, bit by bit. Then the Danube spread itself, reminding one of all the Niger Rivers, and cut itself off from everything but the sky, shutting off the plain by a hedge of willows and occasionally gathering new impulse from the grainless mills, hurrying past the bridges . . .

Zaël was stretched between Jean and myself on board the ship. She had put on her silk dress to travel in ; across her forehead she wore a white ribbon, and her bare feet were thrust into velvet slippers. The shadows of the smoke rolled along the canvas which flapped above our heads.

" I do love being with my nunkies," she said.

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Then the Hungarian plain with its waving ripe corn, broken by solid belts of acacias, loaded with corn stacks and plastered with manure, gave place to mountains. The river narrowed. Pine woods rolled into view, retaining the smooth level of their

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form in spite of the slopes, losing their outline after leaving the river banks, and looking like huge cupboards in which little compact villages were hidden, nestling round their squat church towers. As we got nearer to Pest, we saw naked men and women bathing noisily from the banks of the river. Boats burdened with the wailing of concertinas rocked in the wash made by our steamer. Women apricot sellers in embroidered blouses climbed on board. After crossing the Czecho-Slovak frontier we were visited by Magyar non-commissioned officers in threadbare shell-jackets and moustaches twisted over their teeth which resembled dead turquoises.

At last the sun sank into a bank of clouds as iridescent as a peacock's tail. Pest announced its presence by factory chimneys and the smell of breweries and tannin; then a bend in the river revealed Buda with its Regency hotels, its terraced gardens, its childish, theatrical and barbaric Royal Palace. The big hotels, all their windows lit up, were moored, as it were, along the promenades, swinging from the sky by the raspberry-coloured light of their roof gardens.

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At the Hôtel Danubia Jean and I occupied the same room. Začl's room led out of ours. The walls were still pitted by machine-gun bullets, stripped of their stucco by enfilade fire from monitors. We forgot the oppressive heat of the town in that of the paprika seasoned food, which burnt holes in our cheeks and could only be quenched in the thin white wine of Presburg which tasted of flint. We slept all day, closing our shutters on the Danube, ochre-coloured and full of incandescence which bleached the bastions of the citadel at the foot of the scorched gardens in which nothing grew but coloured balls of glass.

It was not till the evening that the town woke up. In the restaurants the gipsies began their commentary on life ; mournful altos, the lethargic music of the 'cellos, cymbals as toneless as harps beaten with felt-covered sticks. 'Women dressed in muslins and light cotton *crêpe* gazed at the inter-allied cars patrolling the city without taking any notice of the klaxons ; the soldiers driving the cars leant out of their cars and pinched them.

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After the second day, evil-looking faces began to prowl round us. In spite of our objurgations, the hall porter failed to return Zaël her passport, declaring that the police had not sent it back. We were advised not to leave the hotel in the evenings. Taking advantage of the impotence of the authorities, bands of unpaid army officers took possession of the streets, extorting money from passers-by and sandbagging all Jews and foreigners.

We accompanied Zaël to the synagogue. The Jewish quarter viewed our visit with apprehension. Whenever we stopped too long in one place we saw anxious faces peering from behind the shop counters. The shops were being shut up. Galician Jews, in lambskin coats with greasy lovelocks over their ears and their shoulders white with scurf, were selling pamphlets on Zionism, candles and dyed sheepskin coats. At the far end of the courtyards which communicated with one another like rabbit burrows and which were each overlooked by tiers of balconies one saw a tree, an unharnessed horse, an unfed child.

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"The synagogue," said Zaël, eagerly breathing in the Jewish smell of the staircase. "Wait here for me a moment."

She came down without having been able to get in. The old man had barricaded himself in and dared not open the door. Some soldiers in tattered uniforms held the landing during the hours of service to stop people entering. They had driven her away. "They are itching for trouble," she said, "and are longing to shed blood."

When we got back to the hotel, we found that we had been followed.

We went to bed at about midnight. Zaël came into our room to have a drink and to smoke and then undressed in her own room, asking us to leave the communicating door open. She was just the same as usual. She seized a handkerchief and danced a mazurka in her chemise.

In the middle of the night Jean woke me up :—

"I can't exactly hear anything, but I have an

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idea that something has happened whilst we have been sleeping."

We switched on the electric light. It was three o'clock. I jumped out of bed and looked in the next room. Zaël had vanished. The door leading on to the corridor was open, the sheets were thrown back, her clothing was on the floor. There was a man's footprint on the pillow. A chemical smell hung in the air.

"Chloroform," said Jean.

We rang the bell. No one answered it. At last the night porter came up; he was a Neapolitan of the colour of grey clay which is the colour of the faces of all creatures of the night. He had heard nothing, seen nothing. No one had left the hotel.

"It is quite preposterous that in these days anyone should disappear from a hotel of this sort," I said. "We will go to the police."

The Neapolitan porter smiled.

I lost my temper.

"We will have the place searched from cellar to attic."

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“ There is no attic, monsieur. As to the cellars . . . the Danubia is certainly a palace, but I know no one who would risk going down there nowadays. The cellars are very large ones ; they have outlets on to the Danube. . . . I don't wish to frighten you, monsieur, but believe me, it would be wiser to look for her in a few hours' time from the St. Margaret's island dam.”

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THE gothic porch was lit by a two-hundred candle-power lamp. I stood for a moment on the opposite pavement. People were going in ; a few men alone and then others who had women with them. With a beating heart and in a state of mind that was far from heroic I waited until it seemed that the last person had gone in. A flight of uninviting steps led up to a door before which there were a few traces of sawdust. In the hall I was assailed by a smell of gas and stale perspiration. A small girl in pigtails read my temporary membership card—a little parchment hexagon—and I entered the men's dressing-room. Shirts were hanging there, emptied of their bodies ; braces were resting from their labours ; boots exhibited

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their heels shod with little indiarubber discs ; apparently the feet of Northern Europe had not escaped that wave of American exportation which, in the form of calculating machines, fly-swatters and dental floss, descended upon Eastern Europe on the morrow of the Armistice. A nickel shoe-horn twinkled in the middle of the room.

Ought I to undress ? Doubtless the notices on the walls said so, but how could anyone understand those words with their toad- or insect-like faces equipped with feelers and carrying on their backs countless modification signs like pimples and small air-balloons ? I removed my shoes and opened the door a little way. Though my attire would now have been eminently suitable for a mosque, it was obviously not that of the club, for there before me were two members in full dress, if one could call it that. One of them was facing me, his back resting against a balustrade. A wisp of hair as dry as lichen wandered over his head, first sparse promise of the white beard which flowed down to his chest where it became confused like the tangled horsehair which one sees bursting from

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old sofas in second-hand furniture shops. Then the hair divided into two regular streaks, one on each side of his stomach, frothed up again for a moment and, meandering down his legs like ivy, finished its journey on his feet. His companion was facing him and so had his back to me. He had bristly black hair and the wires of his gold-rimmed spectacles sparkled behind his ears. He too was naked and was wagging his right big toe rhythmically up and down.

I closed the door again and sat down on a bench. The mere fact of undressing and going about naked like the others did not worry me, as from my earliest youth I had constantly been to fencing schools, athletic and swimming clubs and Turkish baths. Besides, as I was careful to remind myself in order to gain confidence, I was here of my own free will, having applied for admission as a foreign member to the "Diana-Bund" or "Society of Diana."

Without having to go back to the fifteenth century when sects sprang up in Bohemia (only to be massacred in the end) to follow the Hussite heresy

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which declared in favour of the return to a state of adamic nudity as a sure means of getting to Heaven, I had often heard of Teutonic Societies whose members assembled together for the sole purpose of living without clothing. I had been put on the right track in the course of reading a German magazine for the propagation of nudity, a magazine devoted to questions of æsthetics and hygiene, to say nothing of eugenics. This periodical acquainted me with the fact that devotees of that new form of reciprocation, the *Nacktkultur*, existed in the Northern European Countries. An advertisement in the Swedish Review "Beauty" did the rest :—

Persons of both sexes, of Aryan descent, who wish to join a Society of which the objects are those of "Beauty," are invited to communicate with Box 78, Poste Restante at ——. Affiliations in all Northern countries.

Happening a little later to be at —, I wrote to the address given, enclosing a stamp for a reply, and I duly received a letter-card in which one Doctor Vulpius begged me to state categorically

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my reasons for wishing to join the Society, and to give him full particulars of my age, profession, etc. I sent the doctor a declaration of principles modelled on the tone of the Review, conjuring up the great civilizations of antiquity, the festivals of Sparta, the laws of Lycurgus, the Germania of Tacitus and recalling also, from the purely medical point of view, the benefits of the chemical action of the sun on the skin.

I was given an appointment for the day after next in the Prince Alexander Room on the first floor of the Café Odin where a conversazione and magic lantern display were to take place, in the course of which I should be brought before the executive committee.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening, after dinner. The café looked out over the timber wharf of the town. A few Norwegian sailing ships with frost-covered yards, the sole reminder of the recently melted snow, stretched their topmasts to the level of the double windows from which

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the paper gummed on them for the winter had not yet been scraped. An evening breeze tortured the waves as far as the islands which slid in a gentle slope into the sea, following the lines of the repairing-slips loaded with newly tarred boats glistening with red lead in the setting sun.

The President (whom I knew to be Doctor Vulpius) was quite blind and wore black spectacles on a wide expanse of blotchy face. Flanked by the Vice-President and the Treasureress, he was solemnly holding forth from the seat of judgment. The Treasureress was a fair woman with a face like a tortoise, obviously an officer's widow: she carried a lorgnette and was surmounted by a hat trimmed with daffodils. She favoured me with a steady and calculating stare which penetrated me like a knife. Her thoughts came out and met mine half-way and I realized that my admission depended finally upon this female guardian of the gate.

I explained myself in English. My remarks were translated to a young girl who was hidden from me by a sheet of paper sticking out of her

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typewriter ; this stenographer in her turn expressed herself in the local idiom. The examination lasted twenty minutes. The fact that I was a Frenchman produced more interest than sympathy and inspired anything but confidence.

“ It is quite understood that you are not impelled by any curiosity of an immoral nature to enter our Society ?

“ We only admit amongst us persons of unimpeachable honesty who are addicted neither to alcoholic drinks nor to theosophy, who do not read loose books and who are persons of financial substance.”

The assistant on his right, a man in a frock coat, of about forty years of age with a red beard and very suave manner, closed the interrogatory :—

“ Do you associate with Russians ? Or with Jews ? ”

After I had produced my passport and furnished a reference, the jury deliberated in low tones. Then the typewriter began to click.

“ You will be admitted for two months as soon as you have passed the medical examination. You

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will be given an appointment for this. Be good enough to step into the waiting-room."

I rose as the door opened. The stenographer came in ; she gave me an envelope and a smile in which I read a favourable verdict. All the awkwardness was on my side. The fascination of the seriousness, the taciturnity and the unaffected actions of these people came over me in a wave. My sympathy went out to her immediately. She had blue eyes bordered with black lashes level as the edges of a fringe, a sympathetic mouth and bobbed hair full of gleaming lights. I was on the point of making advances and of breaking out into a dissertation when, with her toes turned out, she suddenly made me an adorable and extremely rapid little cursey ; it was no more than a quiver going through her from head to foot. Her hair swayed forward and trembled and then, without a word, she left the room.

The next day I passed the medical examination in the consulting room of a suburban hospital, a

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lazaret where refugees from Kronstadt were getting rid of their vermin. A very rapid examination, but very thorough, all contagious disease being a bar to admission (even including bad breath and worms) as well as any skin disease or physical deformity which might spoil the æsthetic pleasure of the other members.

I was accepted, paid my subscription and set to work to learn the rules. My anxiety increased as I read them and reflected on this phrase: "The least infraction of the ideal of the Society, or any indecency calculated to shock the feelings of the other members, involves immediate expulsion."

Without anything on, then, except a turquoise ring on my finger, I had, with my head held high, to enter the recreation room where, twice a week, the members of the Diana-Bund stripped themselves and passed the evening in the costume of heaven. I was going to be one of them. It was not enough that the proceedings were authorized by the Police, and considered natural, for me to look at them quite in the same light. Certainly my apprehension diminished when I thought of

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my previous Northern experiences, the mixed sunbaths on the German shores of the Baltic, the Swedish hydrotherapeutic establishments in which one is delivered over to soft feminine hands which seem to be almost worn away by soap, and Russian bathing parties where I had seen men and women sunburnt and naked with their arms about each other's waists in the island water, blue as stylographic ink. All the same, the thought of finding myself suddenly naked in the midst of women and girls was disturbing. I half-opened the door again. In the gallery with its decoration of flags, gilded palms and snakes in glass bottles, a third man had joined the other two. I looked at him. He was wearing a fountain pen hung round his neck in a sheath of black shagreen; but there could be no question of pants or a handkerchief, even for a neophyte; the time was getting on. I was evidently the last one to undress. With a measured step, firmly, my fists clenched and a dryness in my throat, I entered the hall.

The first thing I noticed was that one corner was set aside for refreshments and there naked

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families in cane armchairs were partaking of coffee and radishes. The sight reminded me of those Turkish Bath meals one has in the cooling room. A lady knitting with her work resting on her stomach seeped to me like a bad dream. I heard shouts and the sound of people calling to one another; the floor shook beneath the stamping of feet. Balls were trundling along with a noise like thunder, scattering ninnepins. I found myself in the centre of a hall surrounded by windows obscured by pinewood shutters treated with boat-varnish, as is everything in this country. Forty people of both sexes were amusing themselves. Quite a crowd of men were high jumping, leaping over a cord which could be altered two centimetres at a time. A nude gentleman who looked like the king of Sweden despoiled by a revolution put the cord up one notch after each series. I strove to concentrate my attention on these people and to avoid looking at the opposite sex. A gymnasium was installed at one end of the room. Solitary enthusiasts raised themselves up and down in the sawdust or were loosening their dorsal muscles with

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Indian clubs. Athletic-looking boys were hurling javelins against mattresses ; when resting they rinsed out their mouths with iced water, spitting it out on to the floor at some distance from them. Elderly ladies, as though the victims of some penitentiary system, were accomplishing hexagonal shuffles of triangular jumps reminiscent of hopscotch. The sound of rings striking together attracted my attention. I lifted my eyes which 'up to this moment I had kept religiously lowered like a nun and I saw, suspended in the air, a curious bundle made of intertwined limbs from which 'pointed elbows and rounded knees were protruding. Then, the body turned ; below the backbone there came a fleeting glimpse of bare pink leg, hoisted into view by the power of the wrists ; a sudden effort on the part of the neck and there emerged a head framed in fair coppery hair, tied behind with a big bow of black moiré ribbon. The vision smiled and I recognized the stenographer of Doctor Vulpius, the girl who had handed me my certificate. She remained like this, on the rings, frog-like, idle, supple, completely at ease, smiling at me with her

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fresh irregular face of a Northern sprite. I felt a pricking sensation running under the roots of my hair. The young girl's head sank again towards the ground and her arms spread out at right angles, stretched to their full extent ; round this as axis the whole body circled and came slowly upright ; the legs in their turn closed, described a quarter circle and came to rest on the floor.

She stood there before me, the most beautiful figure of a young girl that could possibly be imagined. My eyes dared not leave her face. She smiled at me again and greeted me. I felt her breath on my arms. I suddenly cut the interview short and, turning my back on her brusquely, dashed to the high-jump apparatus at which some of the men were still exercising themselves, took a run and leapt on to the spring board in a sort of religious fervour. My foot caught in the cord and I measured my length on the ground. I got up with my nose grazed and my hands all torn, but with a feeling of satisfaction. I felt the urgent necessity of taking strenuous and continued exercise and of not allowing my eyes to wander towards

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where the girl stood. What eyes she had ! I hurled myself at the trapeze, I took the parallel bars in a stride. How sweet, how inviting, the corners of her mouth ! I lifted a pair of 40 lb. dumb-bells. What a perfect bosom ! I carried out a rapid series of leaps, one after the other, rising in the general estimation by my Aryan energy. Panting, out of training, perspiring in every pore, I was forced at length to stop. But she was still before me, an Eve with bobbed hair, before the Fall, without shyness or shame, stretching out to me a pair of arms not spoiled by knotted biceps and triceps, but covered, like those of a swimmer, with long rippling muscles which were hardly discernible. I was quite out of breath.

“ My name is Aino,” she said, speaking in German. “ My parents beg that you will take a glass of tea with them.” I followed her. Her father, a fat man with a sort of pelt which blurred his silhouette, asked me very politely to sit down. He was the manager of the Baltika Hereditas Assurance Company. Her young brother was exercising the muscles of his fingers with spring dumb-bells.

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Her mother kept her ample bosom imprisoned between her elbows. She was reading "Fichte" and gave me a hyacinth to smell. Her arms still retained their youth. Only her face and her stomach showed her age. I fumbled down my sides for my trouser pockets. I sneezed.

"You'll soon get used to going without clothes," she said. "We always do at home. In the summer we sometimes take our clothes off and go and gather strawberries, and in the winter we always break the ice for our morning dip. For the beauty of the ancients is not dead, monsieur, as the Lutherans would have us believe: it is always coming back, like the swallows which, according to our peasants, pass the winter at the bottom of the lakes."

She turned her attention to her youngest son:—

"If you go on biting your nails," she said, "you will deform your hands and you'll be thrown down a deep well."

Everything went smoothly. I drank tea with lemon amongst these robust citizens who exuded respectability and a certain amount of prosperity.

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Coffee with milk, cucumbers and acacia fritters passed to and fro on huge trays, like offerings to Scandinavian gods. Aino's father took a fancy to me and showed me his stomach all furrowed as the result of an extremely rare operation. He told me that his company occasionally effected insurance against appendicitis, re-insuring with Lloyds. He also spoke to me of the nutritive values of vegetables. I looked furtively at Aino. Whenever I caught her eye and my feelings began to get the better of me, I turned my attention hurriedly to some other less perfect body, or lowered my gaze to the deformed feet of my companions, amongst which, rather top-heavy with their big heads, little naked children were disporting themselves, rolling about like lion cubs. No longer fearing to be thought a philistine, I asked everything I wanted to know, drawing the line at nothing. The worst, it seemed to me, was over.

But who was it who suddenly made us play round games? The game of cat and mouse went off quite quietly. We formed ourselves into a wide circle. The cat endeavoured to catch the

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mouse, whose flight we impeded in every conceivable way. Great laughter and excitement. An armistice. Then the game of fox and goose began ; a sort of human chain, a playful farandole in which each player held on to the waist of the person in front. The fox tried to catch the goose, and the living chain writhed, broke and joined up again, trying to protect the prey from the hunter. Aino was behind me. Her fingers seemed to burn their way into my hips like red-hot irons. Laughingly she begged me not to fall back. I avoided contact with her, but in doing so I anchored myself more firmly to a sturdy girl in front, fair, ugly and as solid as a bridge pile, who bent her legs in order to lower her centre of gravity and to withstand the jars better. Conscientiously enthusiastic, she abandoned herself entirely to the game, the angle made by her body protruding towards me, cracking beneath the effort. The recoiling movement which her attitude forced me, in my turn, to adopt, pressed Aino against me. At one moment in which the struggle became particularly tense, I felt her arms go round my waist and her whole

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body press against mine ; her legs took an intolerable purchase against me and her panting bosom was crushed against my back. I shut my eyes and felt an indescribable embarrassment come over me ; in it an outrageous feeling of shame mingled with a pleasant feeling of numbness which made me want to stay just like that for ever. But at every moment the chain was on the point of breaking under the violence of the game. Suddenly I let go my hold and at the same time tore myself away from Aïno. I leapt impetuously from the crowd without daring to look behind me, bounded to the top of the stairs and made a dash for the cloak room, where I shut myself in.

In the street a sharp icy blast like a charge of salt from a rifle cut my cheeks and I felt as light as a bird, and as though I was charged with electricity.

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Two days later I met Aïno in a confectioner's shop.

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“Don’t you recognize me?” she asked.

“Very nearly. If you are Aino you’ve got beauty spots on your left shoulder and your right breast. But it is so difficult to tell in all those clothes.”

“Why do you wear your hair like that? Nothing is more beautiful than a man who shaves his head every day. Don’t you carry your private diary round your neck on a chain? What method do you employ for throwing the hammer? Do you always stoop like that when you walk?”

When I pressed her to dine with me or to meet me somewhere she said: “To-morrow I will come and fetch you with my side-car. We will go and spend midsummer day at G——. Bring a bag with you.”

We passed through the town bouncing up and down on every unevenness in the road, and threading our way with difficulty and the aid of the klaxon. Pedestrians all made way for us hurriedly. When our progress over the cobbled road was blocked by trams we swerved into the side-walk, brushing past the effete and worn-out cabs painted

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in brilliant hues and crushed beneath the weight of their cabmen in astrakhan caps. From beneath the yokes of the troïkas the ponies cast a fiery eye at us through their tangled forelocks. We swept past curious buildings : the High Courts of Justice, the Police Courts, Greek temples dating from the earliest days of the Russian Occupation : the offices of German Shipping Companies with bearded statues of their agents, naked to the 'waist, masquerading as caryatids. Street sellers, buffeted by the wind, were selling all kinds of birchwood articles—bags, bicycles, even beds ; in the shops trade was being carried on in foreign goods : tinned tongues and safety razors, each fastened with yellow ribbons to a portrait of General Krabb. But the chief object in the shop windows was our own reflection ; it swept along, getting itself confused with the goods inside and absorbing them by transparency. There I was in that little varnished crimson coffin out of which peered my hatless head and streaming eyes, and there beneath my cramped legs was a wheel to which our speed gave the appearance of being oval ; above this uninspir-

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ing reflection of myself appeared that of Aino in green stockinette with American cloth boots coming right up to her hips. Strained back by the wind, her short hair full of soft, bewitching lights took the edge from the sombre and forbidding mask of the wire goggles which covered the upper part of her face like a snout; beneath this appeared her thick, young, confident mouth. Aino gave her whole mind to driving the side-car, unconscious of the fœtid smell of the oil and the noise of misfiring cylinders; cutting off the engine and my breath at the same time whenever we came to cross roads, but more often altering direction by the mere application of the brakes, throwing an occasional glance between her legs at the exhaust or a smile at me beneath her elbow.

There were no suburbs. The open country began suddenly at the foot of a five-storeyed building. In the distance a few clouds lay on the road before us like carpets. Above the clear water of the lakes the sky was so bright that the gulls looked almost like crows. Dotted about the country were occasional wood-pulp works above which rose the

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“posts of wireless telegraph stations. We passed through well cared for stadiums erected in clearings in the pine woods ; athletes were busy getting themselves into training there. We flew along the ragged ribbon which could hardly be dignified by the name of road. I hunched myself up, straightened out my legs and supported myself on my hands to minimize the bumping. Aino laughed joyously and the more violent jerks, which almost shot me out of my box, enraptured her. She kept up my spirits with words that were swept away by the wind. A little further on “nothing was left but endless white birches,” black-edged, as though they were in mourning, their monotony broken every now and then by pools bordered by willows with their twisted gouty trunks and in which, half submerged, tree trunks were floating towards the saw-mills. What visions of safety matches !

A month earlier I had left the Champs Elysées, where the trees were already beginning to cast shadows. They were tidying up the Ambassadeurs, and the oriflammes of the Salon were in flower ;

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burnished by tyres, the asphalt flowed like a deep river towards the Place de la Concorde. I missed all those things. These endless birches ! I would have given the world for one chestnut-tree. At Dresden the lilac had flowered and the world was beginning to turn green ; in Sweden they were removing the ice-beams from the ships and thinking of launching their yachts ; but here there were as yet only tiny leaves on the trees. It was as though the moving-picture of Spring was being released backwards as one travelled north. Preceded by the clang of their bells the engines of the trains carried still more birches in their tenders, but in this case only their helpless bodies cut up into fuel. From their bell-mouthed smoke-stacks issued green and red smoke, not so beautiful as the blue smoke of coal, but wafting to us on the wind the acrid scented smell of essential vegetable oils which was delicious. The wooden ski-jumping scaffolds, laid bare by the melting of the snow, poked their frames idly into the air.

I was happy. I took Aino's hand in mine and stroked her wrist tenderly, with the result that

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she cut off the engine and we stopped dead. I clasped her in my arms. She rose on her pedals, pushed her goggles on to her forehead, broke her comb and tried to tidy her hair with her fingers.

“Frenchwomen don’t do that, do they? I had a girl friend once who was French. Her head was so big that she was always toppling over. Her hands couldn’t hold things; something was always falling from her like fruit from a tree, a glove, a bag or something, whenever she moved.”

“My friends,” I replied, piqued, “order their dresses by telephone, wash themselves on the floor and never have stomach-aches. But not one of them possess your lack of eloquence, your tanned skin or that body of yours which slid in and out of those rings like a cashmere scarf through a wedding ring.”

And then, so that she should not get off scot-free :—

“But to me your sisters were always soap-eaters who worshipped idols with the heads of crows.”

G—— consisted of a dark red wooden house

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built on granite blocks. Only the window and door frames were white. On the door someone had scratched Russian characters.

Our two rooms were next to each other, so exactly alike with their yellow curtains, their soft birch furniture, their monumental white china stoves, their double windows between which hyacinths were growing, that I was soon unable to distinguish her room from mine. Everything was so clean that one did not even know where to put cigarette ash.

"We are going to have cold supper and then we will go to bed," she said.

"Already! Wouldn't it be better to wait till dinner time?"

She smiled. I looked at my watch. It was eleven o'clock.

The table was loaded like a fisherman's net with all kinds of fish: salmon, trout curled round in rings, herrings, anchovies tied by the tail in bunches of six. But there was nothing to drink but milk and unfermented beer. Surreptitiously I produced a bottle of Norwegian brandy. Aino clapped her

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hands, drew the cork with a hairpin and sneezed with pleasure. Filling two glasses to the brim she gave me one and took the other herself; placing herself in a position of defence, she clicked her heels and her tongue and paid me the immediate compliment of an empty glass, which she turned to me bottom first with a few conventional words which I did not hear. She had taken off her boots and put on a house smock decorated with peasant embroidery. A necklace of vegetable ivory swayed round her like a second row of teeth. We ate silently like a couple of English people. Aino's cheeks were brilliant without any artificiality, like all Scandinavian faces into which coursing blood puts a colour which fresh air or the most fleeting glance will immediately heighten. A second bottle added its eloquence to the first. Our heads began to buzz.

The laws exact temperance. But the foreigner who comes to a meal provided with a couple of bottles of benedictine is much esteemed. The flavour of the fish is brought out if one drinks it in bumpers. As someone once said to me: "Real

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success never costs more than this," adding that at the same time it was a lot to pay for it. My bag turned out to be a small cellar. I made various ingenious and potent cocktails; the "corpse-reviver" which I had from the barman of the Grand Hotel in Stockholm and the "bosom-car-esser" which I learnt in Denmark. Aino submitted to them artlessly, contentedly and with a cold detachment that quelled my impulse to beg her to take her smock off. She wandered round the table, plate in hand, composing symphonies in fish, trailing her feet across the floor from her winter habit of wearing snow-shoes. As she passed by me I told her passionately how much I wanted to kiss her nostrils. She let me do it submissively. Her skin smelt of tar and caustic soda. I took her head between my hands and examined her features. She was mongol in type, with the flat nose and deep-set eyes which make so many women of her race look like pink-cheeked Chinese.

In my stupid Western way I asked her: "What will your people say?" "It's midsummer day, they will think I have stayed the night at G——."

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I was touched by the frank straightforwardness, the primitive honesty of these people, at all those things by which for so long we have dreamed of replacing our own pretences, our sordid lies, our feeble excuses. Like night in this country, hypocrisy practically did not exist. One bathed in candour and in the midnight sun.

"Aino," I said, "your skin is always fresh and cool; you never take a cruel pleasure in distrusting me; you don't ask for the moon; you have no back hair and are quite guileless. My friends in Paris would say: 'She is just a splendid washer-woman.' You're a girl and yet you're not a doll. When other women are worn out you are as fresh as ever. You stand so upright, you don't turn your feet over when you walk and you don't wear the carpet out in front of your mirror."

"I like Frenchmen because they never leave a woman alone."

"In my country women are quite easy to get on with if you take them out in the afternoon, amuse them in the evening, fondle them at night and don't bother them in the morning. But not

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one of our fair-haired women is really fair, not with the fairness of you."

"You're being disloyal to your own country-women."

"I love things like sunburn, bruises, grazed knees, the marks of kisses, sunstroke and skin that preserves its whiteness at the roots of the hair—all that *you* are, your modesty, your steadiness, your ringless fingers. You see I have passed the age when a man imagines that women only give way to one man—himself."

I was holding her hand, a large red hand, content in the knowledge that I had already seen Aino naked, and certain in my own mind that no misapprehension was possible between us, that there could be no question of drawing back. I ought to know whither I was bound. How unreal all that mass of sham to which I had been accustomed seemed to me now, from the bombast of dresses and the intriguing mechanism of veils in shaded corners, to the chemise to which they cling as though it were a stage property without which their conjuring tricks would fall flat.

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Aino began to give me a list of all the animals in her country, all the creatures which live amongst the islands and in the lakes which are so like each other that one might almost think that the ones had been built of earth dug out of the others.

The penguins on the dung-covered cliffs lined up like bottles in a chemist's shop, the sleek-looking beavers, the eagle-owls in their 'white woolly' coats, the seals like well greased pieces of ordnance, the brown bears sharpening their claws on the trees fringing the Arctic wastes, the humped reindeer amongst the granite rocks, all the splendours of the frost, the pomps of the thaw, the magic of summer.

"Have you got any whisky?" asked Aino. "I love whisky and, if I can't get that, dentifrice, because they make me feel as if I were at sea."

I suddenly realized that she was drunk. But she did not make a noise or bite pieces out of her glass or take her shoes off under the table: she just sat there, chewing large tasteless watery gherkins; then she wiped her mouth on a paper napkin and kissed me on the mouth, calling me "püppchen." There it was. She had reached that happy

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state when Polish girls tell of the jewels they have stolen, German ones try to imitate poetry, when Spaniards object to such and such a kiss because "lips are made to receive Holy Communion" and American girls ask for money.

I tried to take Aino in my arms. She made an effort to get up, collapsed, slid off her chair and remarking "I am not . . ." fell to the floor where she lay with her arms out.

I carried her to her bed. She was breathing heavily. Her clothes fell apart like the husk of a fruit, and once more my eyes fell on her bosom, firmly held to her shoulders by muscles hardened by rowing: I put a cold water bandage on her head. Her legs were open and full of shadows . . .

"No," she said.

She forced open her eyes, closed like those of a new-born kitten, sat up, and said she wanted to be sick.

Frost-rimed stars were already coming out in the sky.. The accordion seemed to catch its breath

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every now and then and wriggle like a bisected worm. Aino and I kept in the bows of the ferry boat. We could hear other couples laughing together, or was it the cries of the seagulls? When we were still less than half-way to the island fragments of sentences began to come to us across the water. The tops of the pines were beginning to turn a deep purple.

Aino had slept until midday, only getting up once to drink half a gallon of water. She fumbled in my pockets. I threatened to throw overboard a flask of Napoleon brandy which she found there. She raised her clear innocent eyes to me; her only reply was to butt me in the stomach like a goat.

I was still vexed that, protected by her stupor, she had escaped me the night before. Her silence now was like the mute reproaches of natives: "Him wicked pale-face; him bring fire-water." I felt some sort of explanation was needed:—

"My country is the country of wine, of temperance, of sociabil . . ."

"One must never quarrel on midsummer night," she said, interrupting me.

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The sun disappeared like a section of beetroot through the bars made by the tree trunks. The ferry boat arrived at the landing stage and her two anchors rattled down from her prow. It was midnight. A strange hour began, orange-tinted and streaked with red. Columns of mist rose above the water. We followed the path which seemed least littered with fish-bones, paper and torn under-clothing. The whole island was illuminated by bonfires, lit by enormous blocks of granite. Other fires were floating on the water.

"Let's stop here near that spring," said Aino, "it goes so well with the view. These bonfires are supposed to incite the sun to return by force of example. The stones are merely sexual symbols."

"I like you much better when you call me 'püppchen,'" I said, peevishly.

In the shadows couples were hugging each other on the ground, silently, unconscious of our presence, utterly cut off from their surroundings. We stepped over their bodies. Elsewhere noisy games were in progress, accompanied by songs and the

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report of fire-arms. Beneath the mountain ashes young girls were foretelling their future from split ears of corn. The smell of roasting pine needles and baking cakes came up to us. People were jumping into the bonfires with arms and legs outstretched, uttering their wishes out loud in the middle of the flames. Fantastic shadows strewed the ground and flickered round the fires.

I begged Aino to talk to me about herself. She was studious by nature, she said, but she admitted that she was fanciful. The year before she had been appointed secretary to the Northern Territorial Commission and had come into close touch with the Bolsheviki. She had a uniform with gold piping made for herself in Stockholm, and a cocked hat trimmed with vultures' feathers, which she wore on the day the treaty was signed. Feeling a sudden looseness round her waist she found that, whilst she was talking, I had undone her dress.

I whispered things to her, full of hidden meanings.

"I never go about naked except with my family," said Aino.

We sat down in the middle of a clearing in the

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wood, amongst cows which lay on the ground and smelt of whey. All around us rose the tender sighs with which women sought to excite their large-limbed lethargic swains. With a hoarse cry someone stepped into a concealed gully and there was a sound of bones cracking like dead wood.

“What are you thinking about?” asked Aïno.

“The simple grandeur of these saturnalia stirs up my lustful, lying and inquisitive French soul. I know the New York parks which, during the hot nights in August, remain open to the public. In the damp warmth, workmen in their shirt-sleeves lie down with Irish girls on the grass plots which look like cemeteries in the gloom; now and again a Neapolitan mechanic half remembers his forgotten tenor voice; the Slavs gather together and sing choruses. In Hyde Park in the winter lovers stay with their lips locked, amongst the sheep, swathed to their shoulders in mist, heedless of the clamourings of the Salvation Army, with no thought of sitting down, enthralled in each other. In Madrid, in the Recoletos, behind the motor cars drawn up before the Ritz, muleteers in black velvet fumble amongst

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the flambic petticoats of the girl hawkers. In Tahiti the women swim in a damp herd to the boats as they come in, and clamber on board. In Paris, in the moats of the fortifications, young couples with their hair all frizzed up . . .”

Aino clasped her hands tightly round my neck :—

“ You are nothing but a cosmopolitan swine,” she said.

I took her in my arms and she stayed there for the remainder of the night, that is to say, hardly ten minutes, for the sun, after a hurried dip, was beginning to clamber back over the horizon.

